

PC

PowerPlay

PC GAMES & TECHNOLOGY 100% AUSTRALIAN

FULL REVIEW

ALIENS VERSUS PREDATOR

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X-WING ALLIANCE • SHANE WARNE CRICKET
RESIDENT EVIL 2 • STARSIEGE

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Playtested

BETA TESTER

Play games & Get Paid

WAR GAMES

Million \$ Military Sims

PLAYTESTED

BLASTER PC II

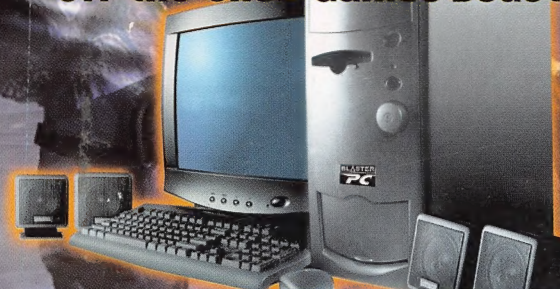
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ON THE CD



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ISSUE 37
\$8.95

JUNE 1999
NZ \$11.95 inc. GST

The Kingdoms

THE ONCE MAGNIFICENT land of Darien has been brutally divided among four warring sibling monarchs. Now it is time for you to embark upon a massive crusade to rule the Kingdom of Darien.

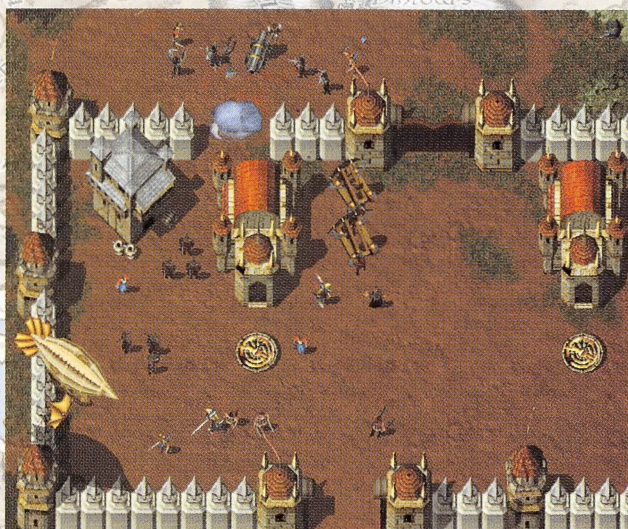
Choose your side, plot your strategy and prepare for the fight of your life: the epic battle to conquer the land of Darien.

Features

- ☞ Play as one of four unique civilisations with different build hierarchies and combat strategies.
- ☞ Command armies of undead zombies, foot soldiers, dragons and beasts of the earth, sea and sky.
- ☞ Use weapons forged from steel and stone. Attack on foot with swords or at a distance with cannons and catapults.
- ☞ Traverse 3D environments filled with forests, marshes, rolling hills, and mystical keeps.
- ☞ A streamlined and intuitive interface lets you concentrate on the combat.
- ☞ Challenge friends over LAN, modem and on Cavedog Entertainment's own **Boneyards™**.
- ☞ Features hardware support for stunning graphics and special effects.



Attack on full 3D terrain filled with forests, castles and cities.



Charge with hundreds of unique units including monsters, dragons, catapults and skeleton archers.

"TA: Kingdoms is a fantasy tag-team match on a global scale. It's melodrama, it's excitement, it works."

—Computer Gaming World: Cover story

"... the ... look of Kingdoms is completely unbelievable."

—Imagine Gaming Network

"... some of the most amazing character design we have ever seen ..."

—GameFan



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are in chaos...



Attack the skulled cliffs of Taros with mighty naval vessels.



Powerful dragons bring death from above.

the epic battle to conquer Darien begins June 1999.

KINGDOMSTM

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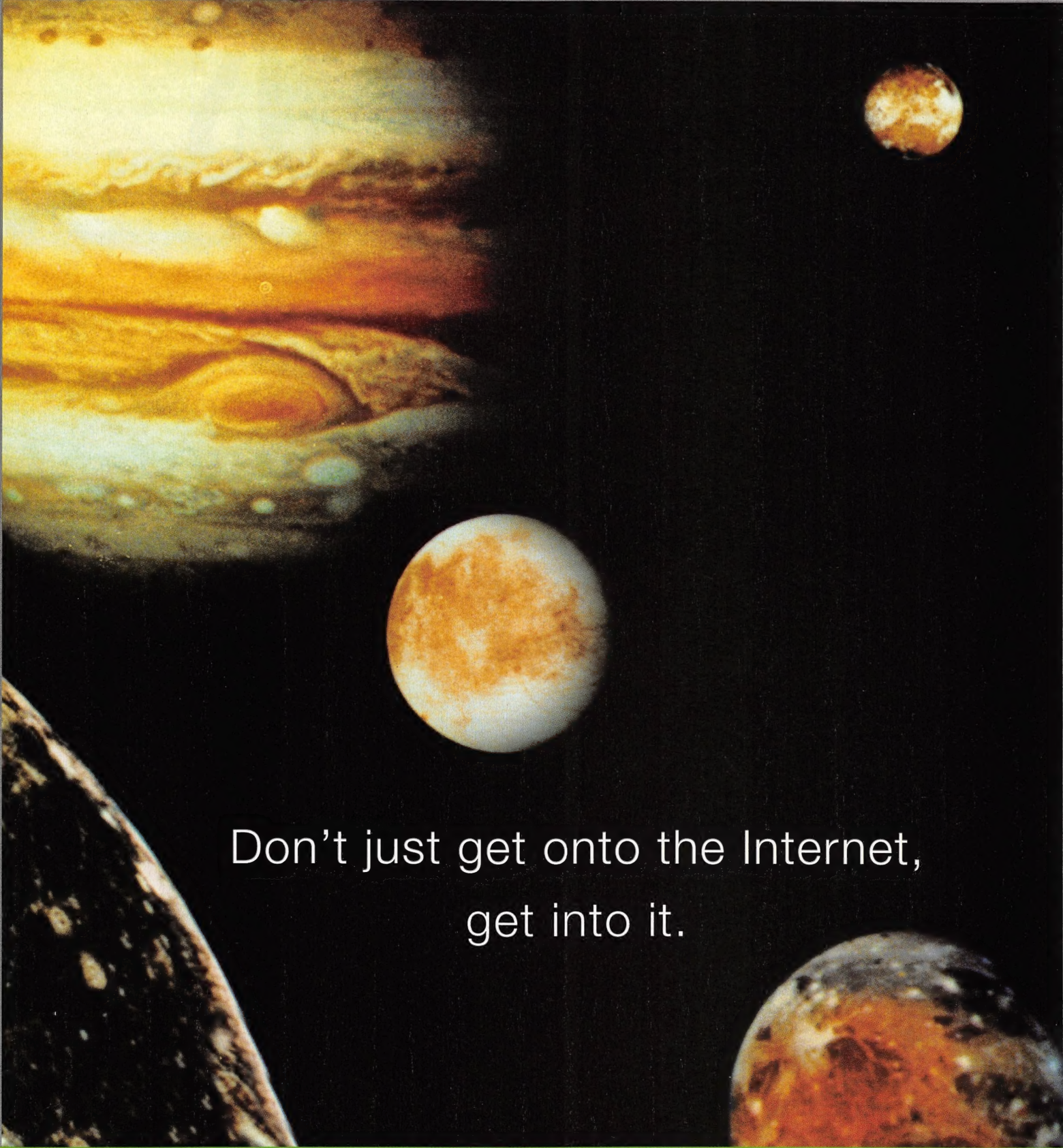


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The Internet lets you journey to the far reaches of the universe. But to really get into it, you've got to go there with an Intel® Pentium® III processor. Whether it's exploring new galaxies in 3-D or creating your own Web page, the power of the

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YOU'RE GONNA DIE.

YOU BUILD YOURSELF A REP WITH KILLINGS AND STREET KNOWLEDGE.

BUT THE HIGHER UP YOU GET, THE MORE THUGS WANT YOU DEAD.

WHO DO YOU WASTE? WHO DO YOU WOUND AND THEN SQUEEZE FOR INFO?
WHEN YOU ENLARGE YOUR TERRITORY, YOU INCREASE YOUR DANGER.

ARE YOU UP FOR THIS GAME?



TARGET SPECIFIC BODY PARTS AND ACTUALLY SEE THE DAMAGE DONE-INCLUDING EXIT WOUNDS.



BUILT ON TOP OF THE REVOLUTIONARY
QUAKE II ENGINE, INCLUDES
MULTIPLAYER GANG BANG DEATH
MATCH FOR UP TO 16 THUGS.

Actual Gameplay Screens



KINGPIN™

L I F E O F C R I M E™



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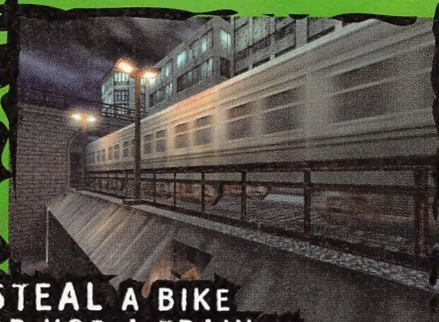
**TALK TO PEOPLE THE WAY
YOU WANT...
FROM SMACK TO PACIFYING.**



**EVEN THE ODDS BY
RECRUITING THE GANG MEMBERS
YOU WANT ON YOUR SIDE.**



**STEAL A BIKE
OR HOP A TRAIN TO
GET AROUND TOWN.**



Actual Game Thug

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FROM THE RELEASE



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cypressonline.com



Interplay
FOR GAMERS BY GAMERS



XATRIX
entertainment

Anticipated
Rating
MA15+

FOR MORE INFO CHECK OUT WWW.INTERPLAY.COM/KINGPINHUG

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You think you know the 'easy map'? New tricks and tactics to give you the edge.

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A3D or EAX? There are now a plethora of amazing 3D sound cards on the market. We game test the leaders and try and figure out the big picture.

ONLINE

Net Game News **138**

Game action online. Get the latest on the internet's continual evolution towards it being nothing but an amazing platform for gamers.

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Web pages, silly.

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See the names behind the faces! See a bunch of people used to sitting at home, alone, in front of their PC's gettin' jiggy in a mad frenzy of jellyfun.

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PCPP readers let loose.

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Oh boy! Free stuff!

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Back in the olden days games weren't quite as shiny, but the gameplay! Ohh the gameplay! David looks back at Ultima Underworld: Stygian Abyss.



For the superior system
Put Intel Inside® and
ViewSonic® on top!



(PC Sold Separately)

Turn traditional thinking on its ear.

Today, regardless of the PC brand you choose, the most important component is not the computer. It's the monitor. Yesterday, the hot phrase was "Monitor Sold Separately." Today, it's "PC Sold Separately." Technology blurs the lines between one computer and another. They're all fast, all loaded, all pretty much the same.

What's different, what's exciting is happening in displays - multimedia monitors with built-in teleconferencing capabilities and monitors with short depth technology that will save you a lot of space.

ViewSonic PS775 is a real space saver with a footprint comparable to most 14" (various viewable) monitors. With spectacular specs like 0.22mm horizontal dot pitch, a resolution of 1280 x 1024 at 90 Hz flicker-free refresh rate and SuperClear™ screen technology, it provides high-contrast, strong, bright color images. With the USB hub base, it allows users to incorporate up to four additional USB compliant peripherals for multimedia.

At ViewSonic, we developed the PS775 for anyone looking for high performance suited to a compact environment. It's TCO'95 certified. By putting ViewSonic PS775 on top of your priority list, you'll ensure your Visual Computing™ experience is guaranteed to be excellent.

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What we're playing:

Ben: Grand Prix Legends, HOMMIII, TOCA 2,
Civ: CTP, Blink 182
March: Alpha Centauri, X-Wing Alliance, Euro
Air War, Mogwai
David: Thief, Baldur's Gate, Half-life, Tony
Bennett
Malcolm: Final Fantasy VIII, Jungle Brothers

2001: A long Way Away



A couple of things. Firstly, I'm in a fine mood, thanks, but if one more console gamer tells me how amazing the PlayStation 2 is going to be... Well, I'll be just a bit cross. Yes, it's a wonder of 3D fillrates etc. Yes it's way faster than Voodoo 3 or TNT. But please - these 3D chipsets are commonly available right now.

Playstation 2 won't be on sale here until at least the end of 2000, more likely early 2001. Imagine what will develop in the fast moving world of PC 3D graphics in the meantime. People! Get real! In related news of interest, at a gathering of Next Gaming mag staff recently, it was asked which PlayStation games were people's favourites, after a couple of years of the console and many hundreds of games. How many? Which games? Was it tough narrowing it down to a shortlist of ten? Actually not one staffer could think of a single PlayStation game AT ALL that they enjoyed for more than a few minutes. NOT ONE.

We can fight all we want with console gamers, dragging up the usual arguments about internet, flexibility, networking etc. You know, all the usual reasons which we argue for the superiority of the PC. Don't bother; the real killer reason is that PlayStation games are dull and lifeless compared to what we get for the PC. So there you have it - half a dozen PC gamers reckon there aren't any decent PlayStation games. How much more scientific can you get?

Right. That felt good. On to some basic housekeeping. There was movement at the station this month. Long-serving and much-enduring Deputy Editor Gareth Jones

is relocating to an ergonomic workstation elsewhere in the building. Gareth will be producing a new games mag for us. We'll be shouting and screaming for attention when it's out, so stay tuned for the big announcement. So Gareth, good luck and thanks. Never in the field of magazine publishing has an Editor delegated so much to his Deputy. Nice one.

Moving one step up the ladder is March Stepnik, he's the new Deputy Editor. March knows games and writes like a poet. He also enthusiastically greets the prospect of a heavy workload, so there's no real danger that I'll have to start doing some real work for a change.

And finally, after serving the World's Longest Apprenticeship, David Wildgoose scores a full-time job as staff writer. David has a firm opinion on everything and thoroughly enjoys sharing those views. He's a cruel, heartless bastard - his pen is not a sword: it's more of a thermonuclear bomb. Blessed with balance though, David gushes warm love for anything he likes. We've always called it as it is at PCPP, and that's not about to change.

Ben Mansill
Editor





CD GUIDE

Don't wait 8 hours for a download, we've got all the demos here!

CD #37

Starting the PC PowerPlay CD

Welcome to the PCPowerPlay double cover CD. We have included all the popular programs to make the most of your PC. Using the CD is easy. Simply insert the CD into your CDROM drive and it should automatically bring up the Menu interface. (If not, don't panic, just click on the RUNME.BAT file to manually install the program).

Once the menu is up, you can navigate the screens using your mouse. Click on the category of your choice (eg Education, Fun, Games, etc..) to begin. Have a look at the programs, and if you see something you like to try out, just click on it. Depending on your choice, the program will either install itself to the hard drive or run straight off the CD.

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Faulty CDs will be replaced free of charge. Send it, together with a description of the error, to:

PC PowerPlay CD Returns

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The Games



Daikatana

Publisher: Eidos Interactive

Genre: 1st Person Shooter

Jump into the latest first-person shooter from John Romero and let the bloodshed begin! Daikatana Deathmatch differs from some previous shooters by rewarding players for staying mobile, as opposed to sitting in a hiding place and sniping passers-by. Also, players will be pleased with the different ways various weapons cause damage, and how lesser weapons stay lesser in status by cutting through armour but doing little harm.

Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA 4MB, 3D Card

Want: P2-300, 64 MB, SVGA 8MB, 3D Card

Battlezone: The Red Odyssey

Publisher: Evolve

Genre: 3D Shooter

The struggle between the CCA and the US forces in space is escalating. The Americans have followed the Russians to the Jovian system in pursuit of the Fury technology and have fanned out across the four major satellites. On Europa, Callisto, and Io, their battle is moving back and forth, with no sign of a victor yet, but nothing has happened on Ganymede...until now. You arrived on Ganymede two weeks ago with the Black Dogs and were allocated a simple protection job - watching over the dozen or so scavengers as they gather bio-metal.

Need: P90, 16MB, SVGA

Want: P166, 32MB, SVGA 2MB

Only you can rule the 'hood!

Need: P90, 16MB, SVGA

Want: P166, 32MB, SVGA 2MB

DemonStar

Publisher: Ionos

Genre: Shoot-em Up

DemonStar is a vertical arcade-style shooter by the company that developed Raptor. Plug in a couple of new Microsoft Gamepads, and play just like in the arcade - two players on the screen at a time, fighting for bonuses and power-ups.

You are a test pilot flying the RaptorX prototype for the Quizar fleet. The RaptorX is a state-of-the-art design, which all enemies fear. The enemy Xidus Armada recently discovered the bay where the Raptor's were stored, and quickly launched a surprise attack upon your fleet. All the Raptor's were destroyed, except for a few pilots testing the newly designed RaptorX prototype at the time of the attack. It is up to you to save the rest of the Quizar fleet. It won't be easy though - the Xidus Armada has built a Demon Star empire that attacks anything in site. Do you have what it takes to seek out and destroy the Demon Star, and conquer the Armada fleet?

Need: 486 DX66, 8Mb, SVGA

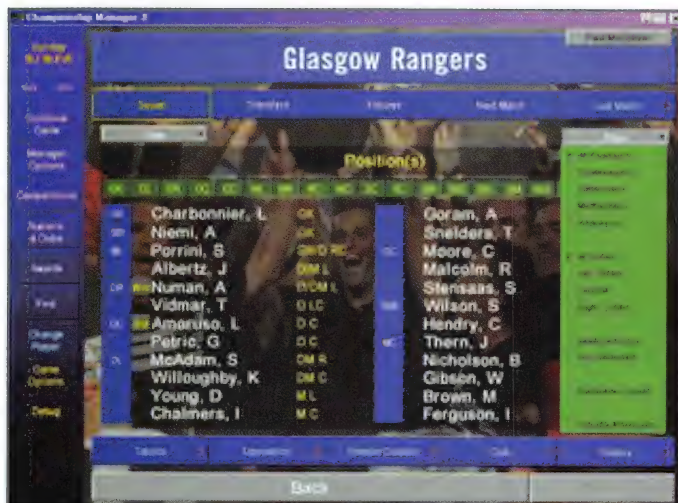
Want: P66, 16MB, SVGA 2MB

Beat Down

Publisher: Hot-B

Genre: Strategy (Real Time)

Beat Down from HOT-B introduces the fear of urban society into your home. Defend your turf and expand your power base by any means necessary. Wit, power, intimidation and an iron stomach are needed to survive in this real-time action adventure. Seeking to destroy your gang and exact revenge, ruthless rivals prowl the dangerous streets.



CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3

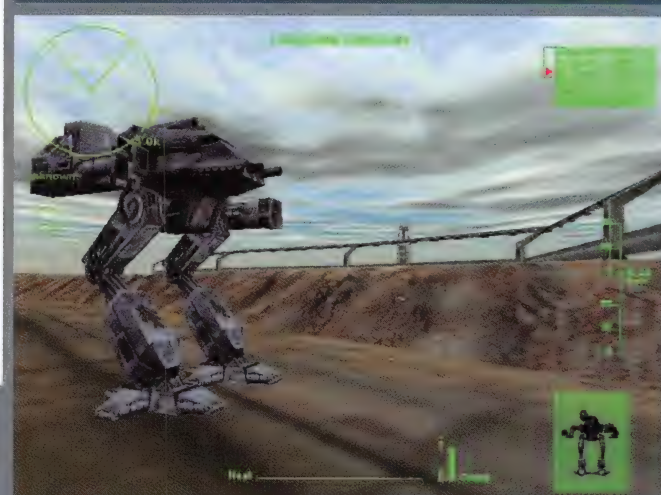
Publisher: Eidos Interactive

Genre: Sports - Soccer

The third in the series that put sports management sims on the map. Customize your teams with the use of accurate profiles and histories for over 25,000 players, managers, and coaches, collected by football fans from every corner of the globe.

Need: P133, 32MB, SVGA

Want: P200, 64MB, SVGA 2MB



Mechwarrior 3

Publisher: Hasbro

Genre: 3D Shooter

Need: P166, 32 MB, SVGA

Want: P233, 32 MB, 3D Card
The Inner Sphere's long awaited counter-attack against the vicious Smoke Clan Jaguar rages on, but the enemy isn't willing to lay down and die. On a world with the ironic name of "Tranquil", one of the last ranking Smoke Jaguar Colonels is preparing a bastion for his Clan to lick its wounds and prepare its vengeance. Your mission - conduct a high-impact commando raid on Tranquil and destroy its usefulness as a base of operations before the enemy has a chance to dig in.

Game Commands

Movement Commands

Forward Up Arrow

Reverse Down Arrow

Turn Left Left Arrow

Turn Right Right Arrow

Pitch Torso Up - (Minus)

Pitch Torso Down + (Plus)

Torso Twist Left <

Torso Twist Right >

Forward/Reverse Backspace

Weapon Commands

Fire Weapon Spacebar

Cycle Weapons Enter

Cycle Next Weapon Group

Ctrl-]

Chain/Single/Group Fire

\ (Backslash)

Select Weapon Group 1 F1

Select Weapon Group 2 F2

Select Weapon Group 3 F3

Select Weapon Group 4 F4

Select Weapon Group 5 F5

Set Weapon to Group 1 Shift-F1

Set Weapon to Group 2 Shift-F2

Set Weapon to Group 3 Shift-F3

Set Weapon to Group 4 Shift-F4

Set Weapon to Group 5 Shift-F5

Alpha Strike Enter key on the numeric keypad

'Mech Commands

Override Auto Shutdown O

Shutdown/Startup S

Flush Coolant System F

Get Up From Fall G

Crouch/Stand C

Center Torso to Legs / (Slash)

Target Commands

Select Target Under Reticle Q

Select Next Enemy E

Select Previous Enemy Shift-E

Select Nearest Enemy Ctrl-E

Throttle Commands

Throttle 0% 1

Throttle 15% 2

Throttle 30% 3

Throttle 40% 4

Throttle 50% 5

Throttle 60% 6

Throttle 70% 7

Throttle 80% 8

Throttle 90% 9

Throttle 100% 0

Jump Jet Controls

Jump Jets J

Jump Jet Forward Home

Jump Jet Reverse End

Jump Jet Left Del

Jump Jet Right Page Down

Cockpit Controls

Select Radar Display R

Radar/Map Toggle Shift-R

Select Passive/Active Radar Alt-R

Damage Display D

HUD Toggle H

View Commands

Look Forward Alt-5

(numeric keypad)

Look Down Alt-8

(numeric keypad)

Look Up Alt-2 (numeric keypad)

Look Left Alt-4 (numeric keypad)

Look Right Alt-6

(numeric keypad)

Look Back Alt-Period

(numeric keypad)

External Tracking Camera Toggle

X

Lancemate Commands

Lancemate: Attack My Target F6

Lancemate: Defend My Target F7

Lancemate: Form Up On Me F8

Lancemate: Stop F9

Lancemate: Go to Mobile Field

Base F10

Lancemate: Command Screen F11

Lancemate: Select Next Ally W

Lancemate: Select Previous Ally

Shift-W

Lancemate: Select Nearest Ally

Ctrl-W

Send/Abort MFB M

Gazillionaire Deluxe

Publisher: LavaMind

Genre: Turn-based Strategy

Gazillionaire Deluxe is a cross between Monopoly set in outer space and Wall Street in Wonderland. It's a wild intergalactic trading game complete with funky Monty Python style aliens, exotic worlds to explore and dangerous pitfalls.

Need: 486/SX 33, 8MB, VGA

Want: 486/SX 66, 8MB, VGA

Sports Car GT

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Genre: Simulations (Driving)

Get behind the wheel of the fastest incarnations of the hottest cars on the road! Race actual cars on real-world courses throughout North America and Europe.

Tune and customise your car for ultimate performance, then compete against computer-controlled opponents designed to simulate the driving styles of the real life drivers.

Next: P166, 16MB, SVGA

Need: P233, 32MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Card

Tank Racer

Publisher: Grolier Interactive

Genre: Simulations (Driving)

You'll have to watch your back, front and sides when you enter the world's wackiest race because Tank Racer is much more than just a racing game. It places as much emphasis on its 'inter-tank' battles as it does on the racing. Blasting your opponents to smithereens and bulldozing through buildings feels almost as good as winning! And there are lots of buildings to demolish from cosy cottages in the English countryside to wooden huts in a

swampland and even a moon-based space station. But the battle doesn't stop there. As well as the different racing tracks there are also dedicated battle arenas where the aim is purely to annihilate your challenger before he annihilates you.

Need: P90, 16MB, SVGA

Want: P166, 32MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Card

Tanktics

Publisher: Gremlin

Genre: Strategy (Real Time)

You'd maybe never guess it but Tanktics features a lot of... tanks. The player's job is to construct huge armies of tanks to protect their home base and to prevent the devious machinations of the Evil Black Tanks.

Need: P90, 16MB, SVGA

Want: P166, 32MB, SVGA 2MB

Way Point Zeta

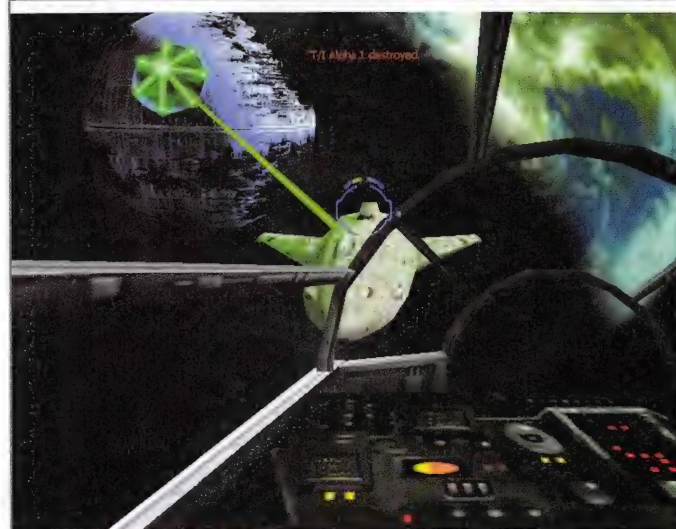
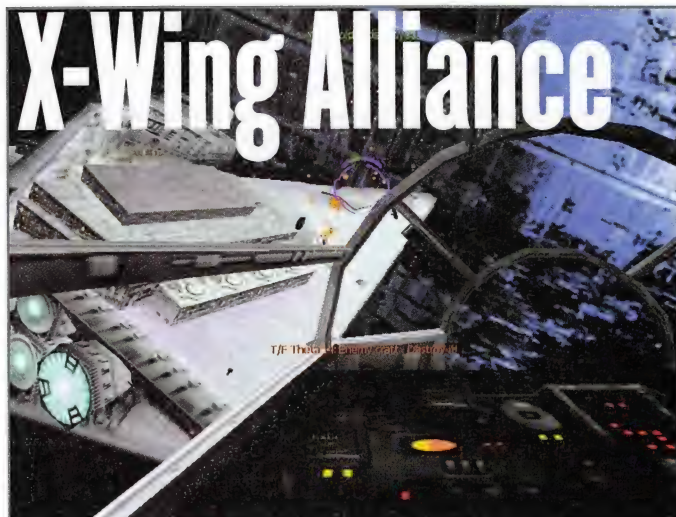
Publisher: Elpin Systems

Genre: 3D Shooter

WAY POINT ZETA combines classic arcade-style action with current 3D rendering technology to make a game that's easily learned, visually appealing, and engaging. A player flies around an asteroid field, destroying rocks, picking up ore and crystal resources and returning to the home flagship. Those resources are then used to buy more weapons, buy bots, and improve the fighter so that the player may then go out and destroy the enemy flagship.

Need: P75, 8MB, SVGA, 3D Card

Want: P166, 16MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Card



Publisher: Lucas Arts

Genre: Simulations (Flight)

The immersive single player story begins with you as "Ace" Azameen, in training to join your family's Twin Suns Transport Services business as a pilot. Your immediate family will assist you as you learn the ropes, along with MK (your droid and constant companion.) As the game progresses you will be drawn into the Rebel Alliance's fight for survival from the encroaching Galactic Empire. The corrupt Viraxo family's schemes compound your problems as they continue with their mission to destroy Twin Suns. The choice is yours and so are the consequences.

Need: P200, 32MB, SVGA

Want: P2-266, 64MB, SVGA 2MB, 3D Card

Essential Controls

These are the basic keys you'll need to use if you want to start flying right away:

R Target nearest enemy fighter

E Target nearest craft targeting you

T Cycle forward through targets

O Target nearest objective

N Next Hyperspace Buoy

Backspace Full Throttle

[1/3 Throttle (You turn faster when you're flying at this speed.)

W Switch weapon systems

X Lock turret cannon forward

G Go to gunner turret

F (In cockpit) Tell turret to fire at current target

F (In turret) Autopilot. Tracks current target.

F9 Adjust cannon recharge rate

F10 Adjust shield recharge rate

F11 Preset #1

F12 Preset #2

' Transfer laser energy to shields

MACHINES™

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EXQUISITE DEATH MACHINES AND

COMMANDING THEM FROM A STRATEGIC

OVERVIEW OR CONTROLLING THEM,

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Utilities & Patches

3DMark 99 Max

3DMark 99 Max is a benchmark program that focuses on testing the 3D performance of 3D accelerators in a "real-world" environment. 3DMark 99 Max is the first benchmark that has been optimized to fully support both Intel Pentium III SIMD and AMD 3DNow instructions at the engine level. Since most people use their 3D accelerator for playing games, 3DMark focuses on game performance measurement using real-world game technology. Flat numbers only tell you so much, so 3DMark 99 Max is a two-part testing suite designed to push your system's 3D performance to the limits. The first part runs 12 tests that include a racing game, a first-person shooter, and subpixel accuracy tests, and then gives you a series of easy-to-understand results, as well as an overall score (in 3DMark points). The second part is a 3D demo with great effects, shape morphing, true multipass radiosity lighting, real-time shadows, textural rendering, a racing game, and a photo-realistic jungle with a reflecting particle waterfall. This second part allows you to see how your system performs dealing with each effect.

Adobe Acrobat Reader Plug-In 3.02

Adobe Acrobat Reader has become the industry standard for viewing PDF documents. Acrobat Reader also comes with a plug-in for Netscape Navigator that allows live viewing of Acrobat documents on the Web.

Alexa 3.0

Alexa is a free advertising-supported Web navigation service. It works with your browser and accompanies you as you surf, providing useful information about the sites you are viewing and suggesting related sites.

AnFX 2.01

AnFX helps you add eye-catching designs to your pages by applying special effects to text, shapes, and images. AnFX's effects are achieved via a small, fast-loading Java applet. No Java coding experience is necessary to use AnFX, and the Java Development Kit isn't even required!

Bleem

This official Bleem demo is designed to show you just how Bleem will run PlayStation games on your system, how it would deal with your particular hardware and games. Please note that your performance may vary according to the complexity of the PlayStation game you're playing and the hardware you own.

HotMetal Pro 5

This is a great tool for anybody wanting to produce their own Web site without having to learn HTML. Professionally designed Web sites can be created quickly and easily.

Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.0

Internet Explorer 5.0, the latest in this Web browser line, includes support for Dynamic HTML, Java, and the Channel Definition Format (CDF), and adds many new enhancements and features, such as better AutoSearch and history box functionality. There are heaps of cool new features such as the Radio Toolbar, which allows you to listen to radio stations over the Internet as you browse. IE also allows you to select the default email, calendar, newsgroup, and HTML editors of your choice. You can even designate your Web-based email provider as the default email program and much more. Install it now...This is the full 150 meg package.

M.Y.O.B. Accounting Plus 8.0

M.Y.O.B. Plus is a fully integrated, double-entry accounting solution including general ledger, checkbooks, sales, purchases, payroll, time billing, inventory, and more.

Phantom Menace Screensaver

This screensaver slowly cycles through images from the teaser trailer for The Phantom Menace - the first of the much-anticipated Star Wars prequels.



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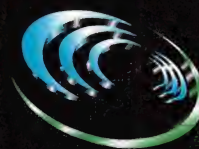
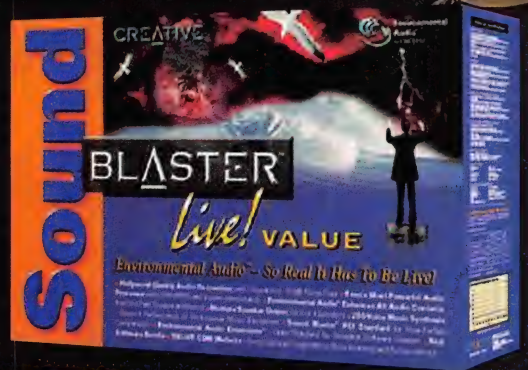
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SIDELINES

Psynosis clearly has plenty of faith in its latest racing game, the wild and futuristic Rollcage. With the game barely even on the shelves, it comes as a surprise to hear that a sequel is already in the works. Developers Attention To Detail expect to be able to have an early version of the game on display at this May's E3 show in Los Angeles. You can be sure the Powerplay lads will be there to check it out.

Highly-acclaimed developers Looking Glass Studios, fresh from their success with Thief: The Dark Project, have announced the latest in their Flight Unlimited series. A rival to MS Flight Simulator, Flight Unlimited 3 (as it will be cunningly known as) is of the pacifist school of flight sims. If just cruising around the skies and not shooting anything sounds like your kind of visually stunning experience, then head on over to the newly-designed website at <http://www.flight3.com>

More sequel news. This time from Eidos, where Warzone 2100 developers Pumpkin have begun preparatory work on a successor. Set twenty years after the original, it will be called - surprise - Warzone 2120. Pumpkin have made no further comments concerning the content of the game, perhaps because they don't really know these things themselves as yet. It's reassuring to hear that they haven't slackened off after completing one game, though.

Westwood's new action/RPG Lands Of Lore 3 was launched in the US in late March thanks to a quite novel competition. Selected gamers were invited to attend a LOL3 marathon on the night prior to the game's actual release. They were there to see who could finish the game in the quickest time, with the winner taking home some very nice prizes. Presumably that wouldn't have included a copy of the game. Oh, and the eventual victor completed the quest to save Gladstone in just slightly over fourteen hours. That's nothing, though, compared to one unnamed PCPP staffer who recalls finishing the original Leisure Suit Larry in exactly 26 minutes...

They're calling themselves 14 Degrees East. East of what? You may well ask. And who are they? Easy, they're the newly formed strategy game division of Interplay. With a line-up of games that can boast three - yes, THREE - new Star Trek games before the end of the year, this oddly-named group will surely be off to a successful start. Also in development are: Tantics (like Tanktics perhaps, but with sunbeds), Chess 99 (like Chess 98, no doubt), Sklansky's Table Poker (played on a table, surprisingly, and not, for instance, the back of a squatting dwarf), and Conquest 2 (which some wag has suggested to be the sequel to Conquest).

It's finally here - Wing Commander, the movie



The history of movies spawned by computer games is littered with disasters.

From Super Mario Brothers to Street Fighter, each as singularly failed to capture the spirit of the original game. Now former Origin man Chris Roberts has brought his own Wing Commander series to the big screen. Recently released in the US, the film's less than spectacular box office results and



unenthusiastic reaction from fans of the game hasn't stopped the announcement of yet another couple of game-



based films. Threshold Entertainment and Behaviour Worldwide have committed themselves to financing movie versions of both Duke Nukem and Zork. CEO at Threshold, Larry Kasanoff, should at least have some idea as to what he's getting himself into - he was the producer of the Mortal Kombat movies.

Cavedog can Elysium

Cavedog, the developers of Total Annihilation, have announced that their proposed RPG, Elysium, has been cancelled. Elysium was to be an ambitious game, featuring a revolutionary episodic nature that would have meant it was to be released over a period of several years. Lead Designer, John Cutter, has already begun work on a new game, of which nothing is known at this stage. While, Neal Halford, the game's writer and designer, has assured fans that he will continue to work on the Elysium world he has spent the past two years creating. The planned Elysium novels to be written by Halford will still be published sometime in the forthcoming year, and the game itself may even surface elsewhere in another form and at another time. No reasons have been given as to why the development of Elysium was stopped. Other Cavedog titles, such as Total Annihilation: Kingdoms and Amen: The Awakening, are still very much underway and anticipated to be released later this year.

Sticky-free keyboard



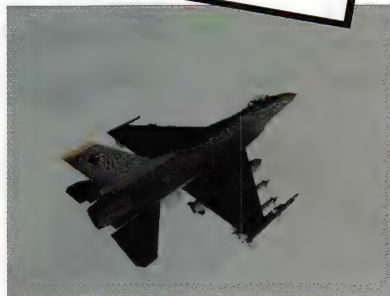
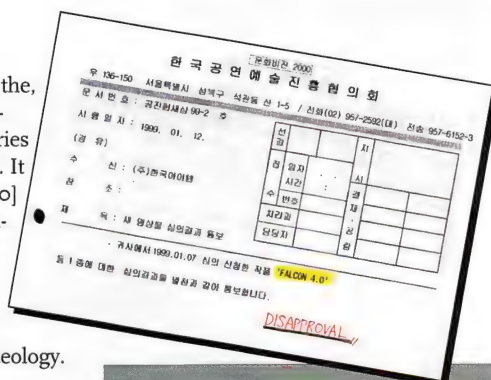
Gamer slobs (and that means YOU) can now rejoice! No longer will you have to live in fear of spilling that bottle of coke or cup of coffee all over your keyboard. No more need you suffer angst from congealed pizza or donut grease cementing the WASD keys in your FPS set-up. Memorex have arrived to save you from your own clumsiness and incompetency. Their new TS1098 Windows 98 keyboard is reputedly 100% spillproof, toughened throughout many hours of rampant abuse. Informatively, Mike Warden, product manager at Memorex, said "We tasked our technicians with designing something that would allow organisations to lift soft-drink bans in total confidence. After all, the average IT team has more important things to worry about than trying to fix keyboards drowned in Cola!" He went on to say more - adding something about the extra quiet keys that allow near silent operation - but unfortunately we spilt coffee over the press release and can no longer read it. The keyboard is available now.

Korean Govt. deems Falcon 4.0 "too realistic"

While we're now well accustomed to games drawing controversy for being excessively violent or depicting any kind of nudity or sex scene, the news that a game as moderate as Falcon 4.0 has run into trouble comes as somewhat of a surprise. The Korean government has apparently not taken too kindly to the astoundingly realistic MicroProse flight sim and moved to ban the release of the game. Our spies have managed to obtain a copy of some official documents from Seoul's Department for the Promotion of Arts that explain the reasons behind such a decision. The game, which accurately maps the territory of the Korean peninsula - detailing, among other things, various military installations and indeed the military capabilities of the nation, has been deemed too realistic. According to the government report, the fact that the game's missions described a war between North and South Korea would

prove too much for the, at best, delicate relations the two countries maintain at present. It reads: "It [Falcon 4.0] may arises (sic) anti-peace atmosphere between South Korea and North Korea. It may also plant a Cold War Ideology. Disapproved."

Meanwhile, recent events in France have shown that western countries are not exempt from similar practices, if for quite different reasons. Moral campaigning types, Familles de France - the Gallic equivalent of our own Senator Harradine one presumes, have pressured several retail stores to remove those games which they declare to have "low social value". Surprisingly, the offending selection includes such multiplayer titles as Unreal, Grand Theft Auto and Carmageddon 2, as



well as horror adventures Resident Evil 2 and Sanitarium, and gratuitously violent platformer Wild 9. Quite how Solitaire - the most antisocial game imaginable - escaped their attention, we just don't know.

SIDELINES

Blizzard's Starcraft did the unthinkable last year by presenting us with a real-time strategy game that had a strong story element as one of its major achievements. While not exactly literature, the tale of the Terrans, Protoss and Zerg was given added depth and detail thanks to the pretty nifty Brood War expansion pack. Now the next rung on the merchandise ladder is about to be scaled. Starcraft is going to become literature after all. Amazing Stories magazine will publish the first Starcraft short story in a forthcoming issue and will follow it up with several more in the future. Two of the game's designers have authored the story, so we can expect it to remain faithful to the game world we all know and love.

Have a wild guess at the number of homes boasting a PC across the US at the moment. 20 percent? 40? Not quite. Over fifty percent of homes (that's half, for the slower readers out there) in the US have at least one PC in them, according to market research firm InfoBeds. According to the figures, the PC market has experienced explosive growth over the last 12 months, with experts further predicting that this is just the beginning of a long term boom in PC hardware. They also predict a strong growth in software developers. Of course, the likely result of a larger software (like games, for example) market means more crap titles to sort through to find the good ones.

HARD TRUCK

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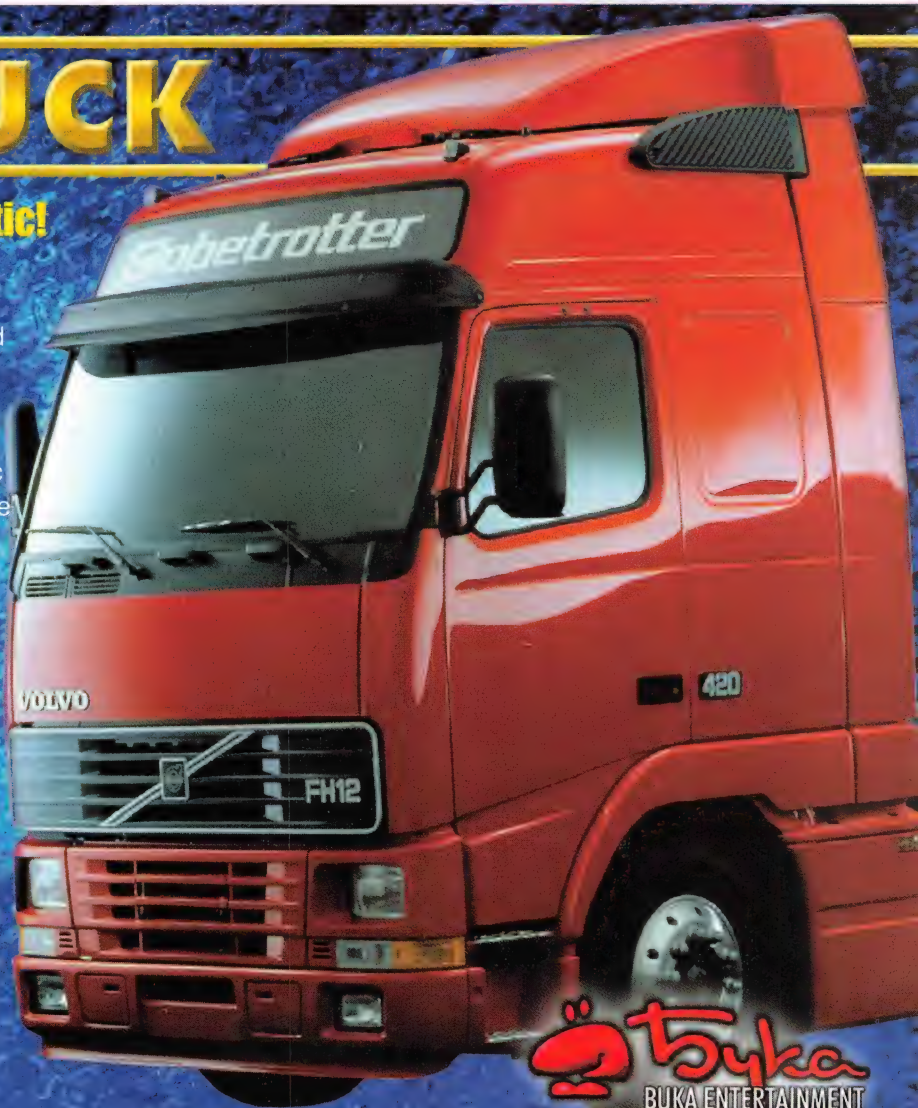
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SIDELINES

More on Leisure Suit Larry. Now of course, this is going to be distressing to some, and a relief to others. The man with his right hand up the proverbial backside of Larry, (creator) Al Lowe, posted a chilling message on a friend's (and former Sierra employee) Web-based message board recently. It read: "Leisure Suit Larry Laffer. 1986-1999. I've learned that Sierra had also decided to kill off my old friend, Larry Laffer". The "also" Lowe talks about in the message includes the number of smaller development teams and projects that got the chop during the massive Sierra restructure, which occurred at the beginning of the year. Sad but true. Now granted, most of you wouldn't place Lowe amongst other gaming greats like Molyneux, Meier and Hollis. However, Lowe was recognized as evangelizing the need to give the stale adventure game genre a good kick up the bum. Expect to see an adventure game bearing the Lowe mark in the not so distant future.

Those affected by the privacy problems evident in Microsoft's Office 97 can go to <http://www.officeupdate.microsoft.com/Articles/privacy.htm> to download two separate fixes (the first stopping the problem from continuing, while the second corrects all previous documents affected by the problem). In basic terms, Windows "stamps" the ID number derived from the unique serial number on all Office documents. This "feature" has obviously not been very well received by the general Windows using public. It appears that all future incarnations of the Windows platform will not feature this identifier.

Red Storm have just announced a sequel to one of the most well-received action/simulation/strategy games of 1998. Carrying on from where Rainbow Six left off, Rogue Spear will feature a stack of new features, best appreciated by fans of the first game. These include the ability to record missions for playback later, improved AI, new weather effects (like snow and rain), a stronger AI routine and new multiplayer modes. Of course, you can expect plenty of new weapons and items. No release date has been mentioned yet, so watch for our full preview soon!

Before we get a taste of the next generation of the Windows operating system, Microsoft are going to give their existing cash cow one last solid flog. Titled Windows 98 Second Edition, the upgrade should include fixes for the much publicised bugs and "hidden features" present in the current street version of the OS. There will be a handful of new features and updates (like IE 5.0 and Internet Connection Sharing), as well as Service Pack 1. Service pack 1 will be available for download soon from the MS web site. Win 98 SE will replace the current version of Win 98 in stores at a similar retail price, and it can also be ordered as a cheaper upgrade to existing Win 98 users via the web. Expect around July.

NewsWire
UK

Steve Boxer

In the run-up to Easter, things are beginning to hot up over here once more. Not in terms of games on the shelves - although everyone talks about a mini Christmas-style boom which is supposed to take place at Easter, it's difficult to see what anyone will buy since hardly any new games of note have made it into the shops this year. But at least demos and previews of new titles have been plentiful. Not to mention the sort of takeover shenanigans to which we've become accustomed in the world of publishers.

A recent demo of Prince of Persia 3D brought welcome news about what remains of another old stalwart publisher snapped up by a modern conglomerate: Broderbund. The company is, of course, now owned by The Learning Company (which now also owns Mindscape), and while we've seen the last of the name Broderbund, its Red Orb brand will live on, gracing all the action games published by TLC. The Mindscape name, too, will persist, although only for artificial life/sim games such as Petz and Creatures. Prince of Persia 3D, incidentally, looks pretty good in a Tomb Raider vein, with a more involving storyline than any of Lara's vehicles and some impressive animation which, in the spirit of the original, were generated by hand rather than motion-capture. TLC/Mindscape has also signed up Organic Art Deluxe, a new version of the artificial life screensaver created by artist William Latham's Computer Artworks outfit. But there is still something of a shadow of the Learning Company, as it was recently bought by Mattel. So all this branding news might have become hopelessly out-of-date by the time you read this.

By far the most impressive demo we've seen so far this year was a sneak preview of Black and White, from Peter Molyneux's new operation Lionhead. Molyneux's claim that Black and White will be the first game to alter its gameplay according to your personality is entirely believable. And if you're



into technology, how about this: the artificial life creature you'll be able to raise throughout the game will not only have rigorous skeleton, muscle and fat models (allowing it to morph in appearance according to how you play), it won't be tied to a specific set of animations. Because the artificial intelligence takes care of its animation, it'll be able to learn new tricks. The game itself will feature realistic creature-fighting (with wounds that will turn into scars) and some of the most impressive magic ever seen. Plus, Lionhead will get a chat-room-style on-line meeting place for creatures (which may fall in love with each other), an 8-player on-line world and a massively-multiplayer universe that you'll be able to plug your single-player world into. Molyneux claims the game will scale (apparently, in future PCs, you'll even be able to enter the houses of its tribes of little people) and its physics engine is fantastic. Oh, and as well as being able to defecate and vomit (in order to get across a particular message about what you think of your on-line rivals), the creatures in Black and White will be "anatomically correct" - if not in boxed form, then via a cheat.

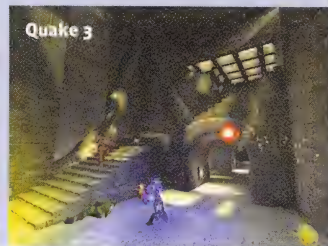
The Royal Navy is thinking of using Electronic Arts' Jane's Fleet Command (which includes natively rendered versions of all its ships) as a training tool and even, possibly as a high-tech means of briefing crews about to embark on specific missions. Games can be useful, you see.

Derek Smart vs
Star Wars
Episode 2&3

Derek Smart (PhD) is a guy who likes to think big. Battlecruiser 3000, the culmination of his life's work, basically, was a huge and hugely ambitious game. Not only that, but it allowed the player to pilot the largest spaceships (capital ships) ever seen in a computer game throughout an environment that doesn't come any bigger - a simulation of the universe itself. Now, though, Derek is thinking even bigger. Word is, he's been scouting around for a sci-fi licence that would be able to do justice to the fantastic ideas for his next game. Star Wars was out of the question, obviously, while he probably dismissed Star Trek as being too small-scale. No, our man Derek has gone straight to the top, to the pinnacle of hardcore science fiction, to Battlestar Galactica. Nothing has been signed or confirmed at present, but we can't imagine Derek being denied.

More on Quake 3
licensing

Rumours that potential licensees of id's imminent Quake 3 engine would be permitted to only design multiplayer games have been proved unfounded. A recent statement from id member Tim Willits has confirmed that several developers have already indicated their desire to use the Quake 3 technology in the design of their own games and that some of these will be single player games. Although the initial rumours did seem fairly unlikely, this still comes as good news for anyone hoping to do to Quake 3 what Valve did to Quake 2 with Half-Life. Indeed, there are some gamers who are more interested in what these licensees will produce than what id manage to come up with themselves.



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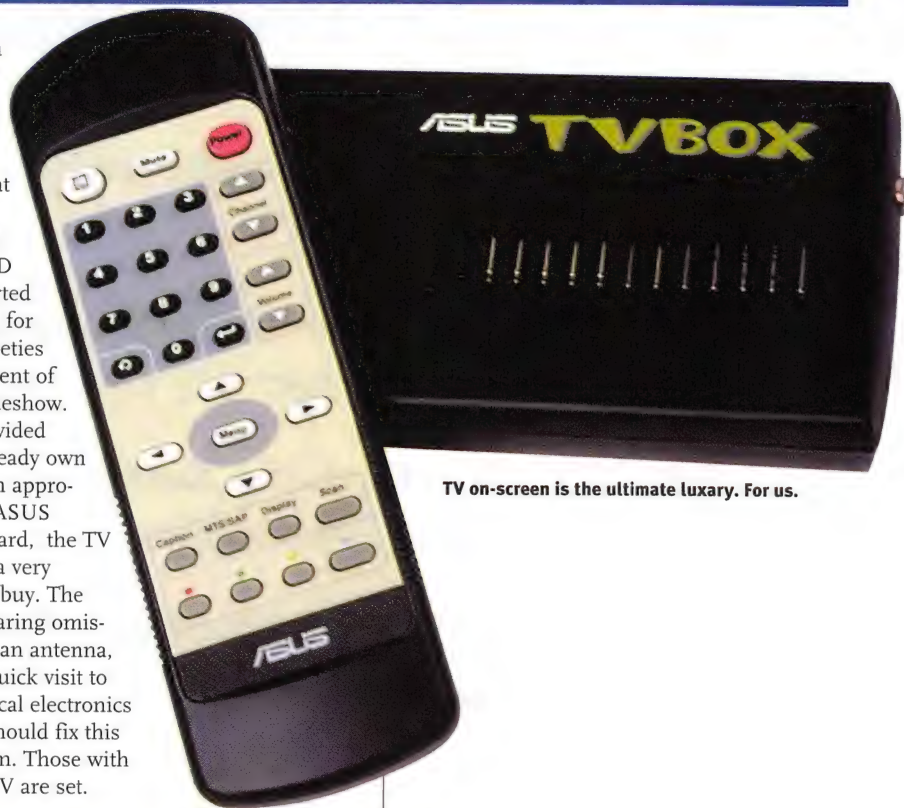
No matter the argument that logic, practicality and economy puts up further down the down the track, there's an inherently pure bliss associated with seeing your favourite TV personality in motion on your Windows desktop. It has a spell-binding effect, even if you've forgotten to plug the antenna in and all that is discernable is a naked elbow from within a stormy blizzard. Such was the case when we first plugged in this unit - we can't fail to mention that we cursed the gods for there being no useable antenna included in the package. And all the lucky people that own cable. More on that later.

The ASUS TV-Box allows you to watch TV in various windows sizes on your desktop and (if you can manage this) work on other programs simultaneously. Unlike other makes and models, this unit doesn't allow you to watch tv with the PC being off - it connects directly to the video card. Which brings us to a very important point. You're going to need an ASUS video card with the appropriate TV out socket. No other cards will work with this.

There are some practical applications for a product like this, other than the obvious attraction of being able to watch TV on your PC. There's the ability to record movie files

(from a home video for example) that can be burned onto CD and carted around for the nineties equivalent of the slideshow.

Provided you already own such an appropriate ASUS video card, the TV Box is a very decent buy. The only glaring omission is an antenna, but a quick visit to your local electronics store should fix this problem. Those with cable TV are set.



TV on-screen is the ultimate luxury. For us.

TView Gold

From: Micronica RRP: \$590

The TView Gold is basically a unit that takes the video signal from your computer that would normally go to the monitor and converts it to a signal that can be used by your TV.

There are three primary modes of operation for TView Gold.

1. Presentation mode: allows you to display images on a television (or projection screen) and on your PC monitor simultaneously.

2. Television Only Mode: this mode is for when your only display is that trusty television set of yours - no PC monitor involved.

3. Video Record Mode: plugs the unit straight into a video recorder so that the images can be recorded onto video cassette. Uses the standard computer monitor and allows for monitoring of images on as TV as well (provided it's hooked up to the video).

The TView is quite obviously aimed at the professional market - for business presenta-

tions, group displays (for example in schools) and the like.

From a gamer's perspective, this kind of package would make sense if you had a large screen TV and enjoyed play-



ing more control-pad oriented games (like sports games and racers). Otherwise, try playing a first person shooter with a keyboard and mouse from the floor or a coffee table. It's not very comfortable at all.

The TView Gold supports resolutions up to 1024 x 768 at 90Hz, handles both the NTSC and PAL formats, and produces flicker free images.

Little monitor, big TV... get this, sorted

Canon Powershot A5

DIGITAL CAMERA - CANON (02) 9805 2000 RRP: \$1,099

Digital camera's have become much more affordable these days, and quite suitably so has their usability and function. They're still some way off from being as versatile as your standard 35mm film camera, but they're getting there.

Canon's PowerShot A5 uses the 5mm F2.5 Canon Lens (which is 35mm film equivalent), and has an image sensor capable of 810,000 pixels in total. It allows for macro photography, features a timer, and has a built-in flash.

The flash card, which stores the images taken (think of it as digital film), ranges in size from 4 megabytes to 15. Using jpg compression, the 15MB card can store up to 81 shots in large, high-res format. This is plenty in anyone's language.

We took the Powershot A5 halfway around the world to give it a good road test, and it handled very well. We downloaded them onto the PCPP computer (using the software and cables included



Picture quality approaches that of film, but with far greater convenience

with the camera), and had no real problems doing so, except the documentation could have been more comprehensive. The images were of good quality too, and ready to go in JPG format.

The PowerShot A5 is a great portrait camera. It doesn't handle moving objects too well thanks to a short pause after the shutter

has been depressed for auto-focus. You can choose to shoot using the view finder (much like a normal camera), or use the colour LCD screen on the back of the unit. The LCD makes a world of difference, as it allows you to instantaneously view the photos you have taken, and edit out the undesirable ones onsite. The unit is also small and compact, without and major protrusions just begging to be unintentionally knocked off.

Just be wary of the price when you try this camera out for yourself.

CanoScan FB320P/FB620P

RRP: FB320P - \$199 FB620P - \$299

Canon offers two models in the CanoScan FB Series, which remain virtually identical except for optical resolution and as a result, scanning speeds. The FB320P has an optical resolution of 300dpi x 300dpi, while the FB620P features a 600dpi x 600dpi resolution. Both allow the user to select a resolution from 25 to 2400dpi.

The most attractive thing about this unit, we decided, is its size. Most flatbed scanners end up taking the remaining space on your desktop, so constant movement of the scanner becomes commonplace. And as with most hardware, the less it can be moved, the longer you can expect the thing to last.

The CanoScan FB series from Canon should easily find a home on your desktop - it measures a petite 256mm (W) x 372.5mm (L) x 63mm (H), and weighs 2Kgs. The thing to consider is that as a result, the CanoScan can only scan images that are no larger than



standard A4 size. It should be remembered that the majority of images scanned are under this size, however.

The CanoScan range represents fantastic

Scan in your pet cat for your web site. Or your girlfriend...

value for money. Canon have produced a compact flat bed scanner with respectable resolutions and impressive power consumption rates. Perfect for the home or small office.



Monivision DM-7748D

Magtron Monitors (02) 9975-3727 approx. \$6000-6500 RRP

CRT: 38" 0.78/0.9mm (36" viewable) - Full Square (DFII)

Display Area: 745 x 555 mm

Horizontal Frequency: 31-52KHz

Vertical Frequency: 50-120KHz

Band Width: 65MHz

Maximum Resolution: 1024 x 768 (NI)

Video Compatibility: VGA, SVGA, 8514A, VESA VGA, MAC II (OPT)

Amp. and Speaker: 5W x 2

Monitor Dimensions: 1071mm (W) x 750mm (H) x 815mm (D)

Weight: 91Kg (net), 111Kg (gross)

It all seemed so simple, and made plenty of sense. The larger the monitor screen size, the better. There was the pleasure of sorting out dot pitch, resolution, and of course the refresh rate - but the real joy in buying a new monitor was the intimate knowledge that it was among the biggest available.

That was the good old days however. We're at the stage now where PC projection systems that can take up to an entire wall surface are on the not-to-distant horizon. And the standard monitor size is definitely on the rise. It all sounds terribly exciting, but it begs the question - is it all it's cracked up to be?

Monivision's DM-7748D introduces some entirely new concerns to buying a large monitor. This monitor is HUGE. Bigger the physical dimensions and finding a place that'll leave enough room for anything else on the desktop. Forget ensuring that the surface you put it on can actually support the weight of this unit (just take a close look at those specs).

The aspect you now have to consider is function. For the first time ever, you'll have to think about your physical position to the screen when playing a game - simply because of its size. For slower paced, more peripheral games - proximity is not an issue. For quick reflex and precise games like flight sims and first person shooters, sitting too close the screen (we're talking a generous distance here too) means having to physically turn your head to give attention to any movement to the edges of the screen. Used this way, neck pains and anti-frags are bound to set in.

Otherwise, this monitor is all class. It comes with the CT-1870 Vision Box, which is a signal converter that turns the monitor into a swanky big screen TV (with a whole swag



of options - most notably allowing for a Digital TV upgrade). This also makes the entire package quite DVD friendly. The ever-so-valuable remote control has been thrown in (imagine the uproar if it hadn't been).

As expected, the overall package will put a big dent into your savings. Still, considering it's not much more expensive than equivalently-sized big screen TVs, this is definitely something to consider. If you can handle the size, of course.

Dell Dimension XPS T500

RRP: \$4,534 (including tax, delivery and insurance)*

- Intel PIII 500MHz processor
- 512KB Single bank Pipeline Burst Cache
- 128MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 12.9GB Ultra ATA Hard Drive
- 16MB STB nVidia TNT AGP Graphics card
- Turtle Beach Montego II A3D 2.0 PCI Sound card
- Altec Lansing ACS-495 Dolby Surround speakers/subwoofer
- 4.8X DVD-ROM drive (plus hardware DVD decoder card)
- 17" (15.9" viewable area) Colour Monitor
- Logitech 4 Button Mouseman wheel
- 3Com USR 56K V.90 Internal Modem
- Microsoft Works 99 (OEM)
- 3 year limited warranty
- Lifetime Telephone technical support

Options

- Iomega 100MB Internal Zip Drive
- 19-21" Trinitron Monitors
- Microsoft Office Small Business Edition
- 3Com network card

The big companies have finally caught on - the home consumer and home office markets are the Next Big Thing for computer sales. People want ready made systems with the latest technology customised to their

needs, delivered as soon as possible, they want reliable support and service after the sale (preferably for free), and they want to pay the least amount possible. Dell is all this, and more.

There has been a long held perception that the large computer companies aren't up to date with what we, as gamers, want from a system. In the past, this perception has carried merit, largely due to a static and often outdated component selection. Nowadays, companies like Gateway, Dell, and even Creative Labs are coming to the realisation that they need to be flexible, offering a range of components with each system, and keeping up to date with the latest trends. That's why nowadays we can choose 16MB TNT graphics cards rather than a year old S3 chip, and you can bet that as soon as the TNT2 becomes available it will become an option too.

As little as a year ago, the ultimate badge of honour was to build your very own system



from the motherboard upwards. Shopping around for the best prices, specifically buying single components and slowly putting it all together. Nowadays, if you're in the market there really is no reason to dismiss a system such as this - as far as ultimate gaming systems, it's almost there as you can see from the specs. It's just a pity that everything's still boring old grey - this is a sexy new toy, and it should look like one too.

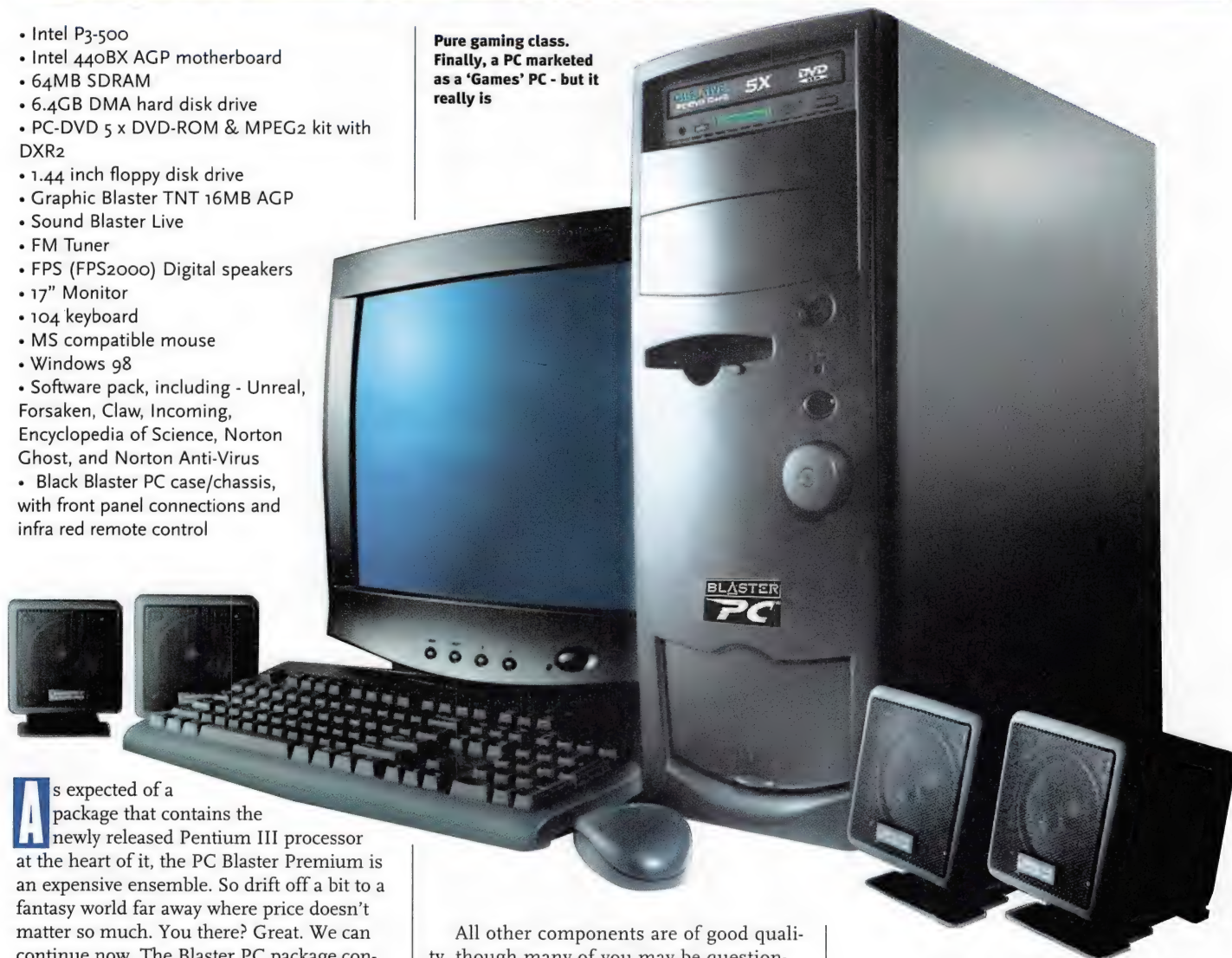
* Base price. Price and system components listed are correct at the time of printing, but are subject to rapid change

Premium P3 PC Blaster

Creative Pacific Ph - RRP: \$5999

- Intel P3-500
- Intel 440BX AGP motherboard
- 64MB SDRAM
- 6.4GB DMA hard disk drive
- PC-DVD 5 x DVD-ROM & MPEG2 kit with DXR2
- 1.44 inch floppy disk drive
- Graphic Blaster TNT 16MB AGP
- Sound Blaster Live
- FM Tuner
- FPS (FPS2000) Digital speakers
- 17" Monitor
- 104 keyboard
- MS compatible mouse
- Windows 98
- Software pack, including - Unreal, Forsaken, Claw, Incoming, Encyclopedia of Science, Norton Ghost, and Norton Anti-Virus
- Black Blaster PC case/chassis, with front panel connections and infra red remote control

Pure gaming class.
Finally, a PC marketed
as a 'Games' PC - but it
really is



As expected of a package that contains the newly released Pentium III processor at the heart of it, the PC Blaster Premium is an expensive ensemble. So drift off a bit to a fantasy world far away where price doesn't matter so much. You there? Great. We can continue now. The Blaster PC package contains all the basic components you need to get a seriously fantastic gaming experience. The Intel Pentium 3 processor, needs some time to mature of course, with the "kkk" instruction set utilized by DirectX 6.1 not yet being put to use in any of the current crop of games - give it a few months though and the P3 will shine.

The PC Blaster also comes with a couple of the most impressive audio and video cards currently available. The Graphic Blaster TNT 16 AGP gives you fantastic 3D performance, at up to 32bit true colour. As to the whole 3Dfx/Voodoo2 vs TNT argument - the TNT's performance is quite similar to the Voodoo 2 card, though it obviously can't compare to two Voodoo II cards in SLI mode. Where the TNT stands out is its colour depth - which puts the 3Dfx to shame. The SB Live card offers a fantastic audio experience (we stress this often enough in these very pages), and offers multi-speaker support. The first step to rich sound is to own quality speakers, but the next step is to have more. Creative have thrown in four speakers to help whet your aural appetite.

All other components are of good quality, though many of you may be questioning the amount of RAM included and the size of the hard drive. Fear not! This machine is upgrade friendly! Considering we're still in that special place where money is not an issue, you can go the whole hog and order the lot from Creative at the onset. For an extra \$199, you get the Modem Blaster 56K Flash modem. Expect to fork out an extra \$250 to upgrade to 128MB RAM, while an additional 128MB (taking the total to a glorious 256MB RAM) will cost an additional \$250. For hard drive upgrade, add an extra \$140 to the RRP for a 10GB drive. Remember that you're also paying for a quality warranty with these prices - which as experience shows, is always worth it.

Also on offer is the P3-450, P2-400, and the P2-350. Each subsequently knock a fair bit off the RRP.

The aspect of this package that we really can't get over is the colour scheme. It's off-black. Undeniably cool and desirable, this Blaster PC doesn't stop at colouring the case either - you get a black mouse, keyboard, monitor and speakers too. For this

reason alone Creative have managed an instant gain in street cred. It's unashamedly vain - but who cares? Black is back and it's about time too! Who the hell decided that the beige colour scheme was the to become the standard in homes and offices everywhere anyway?

The thing to consider about this ultra-cool colour scheme is adding peripherals to the unit. Unfortunately, most don't come in black, which is something to think about.

Still, if you've got the money to throw around you can't do much better than this.

DEADLY NEW WAYS

TO SIN™:

SIXTEEN NEW

MISSIONS.

TEN NEW ENEMIES.

SEVEN NEW

WEAPONS.

Thanks to your crime-fighting

efforts as security expert

Colonel John R. Blade,

the homicidal bio-chemist

Elexis Sinclair is out of

commission. But beneath the

now peaceful city, **mob boss**

Gianni Manero is gearing

up to take Sinclair's place on

Freeport's **most wanted list.**

Wage war through his criminal

empire. Take on thug after

mutant thug in your struggle to

get to the bottom of Manero's

evil scheme...before

Freeport gets iced.



A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH
SUFFER THE ACTION-BASED OUTCOMES OF 16 ALL-NEW LEVELS. BATTLE THROUGH "LIVE" WORLDS, INCLUDING MANERO'S CASINO HOTEL, THE SHIPYARD, AND MUTATION RESEARCH FACILITIES.



CHANGING THE FACE OF ENEMY A.I.
FOUR NEW CHARACTERS AND TEN NEW ENEMIES, INCLUDING TWO WICKED END-LEVEL BOSSES, AFFECT YOUR MISSION AT EVERY TURN. SUPERIOR ENEMY A.I. MAKES FOES KEENLY REACTIVE AS THEY EVADE ATTACKS.



THE MOTHER OF ALL GAME ENGINES
WITNESS THE ENHANCED QUAKE II™ ENGINE'S VIVID 16-BIT GRAPHICS, REAL-TIME LIGHTING EFFECTS, ROTATING MAPS, TRANSLUCENT MODELS/TEXTURES AND IMPROVED PHYSICS.



MULTIPLAYER MOBSTER MAYHEM
ENJOY NEW MULTIPLAYER OPTIONS LIKE WEAPON AND AMMO UPGRADES, AND ALL-NEW DEATHMATCH LEVELS, PLUS TWO EXCLUSIVE HOVERBIKE DEATHMATCH LEVELS— ALL VIA TCP/IP.

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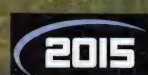
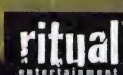
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So you wanna be a **BETA TESTER?**

It does sound like a pretty cool job, being a Beta tester. But there has to be more to it than just playing games, doesn't there?
Brett Robinson tells all.

Just like working for a game magazine, listing your occupation as 'Beta tester' for a major development house might seem like a dream come true. The rationale is that these people get paid to sit around and play games all day, every day. However, as with all jobs it's not all beer and skittles - being a Beta tester is an arduous and testing job that requires special skills and plenty of hard (and at times boring) work.

In demand

The testing process begins with the selection of the testers themselves. Most developers advertise the positions on their own corporate web sites, as well as on popular gaming sites. Competition for these positions is fierce. In May 1998, Electronic Arts Sydney advertised on Hyperactive.com and received an astounding 300 applications within a matter of hours. Of these, only 6 were chosen. Selection is based upon a number of factors; primarily gaming experience and a thorough knowledge of PC and console hardware and software. The ability to communicate clearly and to work without supervision for long periods of time is also needed. Other essential requirements include discipline, strong analytical skills, and the ability to work well as part of a team. But most importantly, applicants must eat, drink, and breathe games. In essence, games must be an applicant's life. When asked what they do, anyone who says "I'm a gamer" before disclosing their field of employ in a manner that implies secondary priority is a potential candidate.

Need and want

Testing the games on a wide variety of machines is of paramount importance. This effectively simulates the broad range of PC's used by gamers around the world. Consequently, the CPU speeds of testing PC's often range from lowly P133's right up to the latest and greatest PII's and PIII's. Hardware configura-

tions are also quite varied, with many machines outfitted with Voodoo or Voodoo2 3D accelerators. Popular 2D and 2D/3D accelerator cards are also used. Some slower PC's are used to test software versions of games and aren't equipped with 3D graphics accelerators.

Investigative testing

Testing a title is a long and often arduous process that can take a few weeks, or several months. Testing constitutes an integral part of the development process. As such, testers work closely and regularly liaise with staff from other departments. These range from Managing Directors and Producers, to Programmers, Artists, Sales and Marketing staff, retailers and the media. Each day testers exhaustively play the game in development, constantly noting factors which cause crashes and lock-ups. They

also write down details of any graphical or audio glitches, spelling and grammatical errors, plot inconsistencies, and statistical errors. This is rarely a straightforward process as many crashes, lockups and glitches occur for no apparent reason. Testers must then investigate these problems and attempt to discover their causes.

Part of the team

Testers also aid in the design and refinement of titles. They

"Each day testers exhaustively play the game in development, constantly noting factors which cause crashes and lock-ups."

are expected to offer suggestions regarding gameplay, graphics, audio, AI and physics modelling. They are also expected to provide feedback on possible alterations to difficulty levels, damage levels, and any other feature which they feel should

be implemented or eliminated. At the end of each day, the testers type out their often vast lists of bugs. Each bug is listed in detail, and classified according to the urgency with which it needs to be addressed. The Programmers and Artists examine the lists and endeavour to fix as many problems as possible. However, there is rarely enough time for all the bugs to be fixed. As a result, high priority bugs are addressed first, while some relatively minor bugs may be left

to be addressed with a patch after the game is released. While companies are often targets of vehement criticism for releasing buggy products, it should be noted that development staff often work 18 hour days. In the final stages of development, testing may be conducted in two 12 hour shifts per day, and development staff often work a staggering 22 hours per day!



Beta testing in EA's Sydney headquarters. The interior decorators must have been paid a fortune. Proof once more in reality the games industry is far from glamorous





A beta tester takes a relaxing break with a game of *Populous*. What!?! You mean that's his work!?!



Over and over again

Each time a number of bugs are fixed, the developers send new versions of the game to the testing team. The entire process then starts again, with testers having to ensure that bugs in the new version that are supposed to have been fixed have been effectively eliminated. The process of testing games is often tedious in the extreme. Initial excitement later yields to boredom and lethargy. It is for this reason that testers must be capable of playing a single title for months on end, and must possess the discipline to consistently work hard. Time is definitely at a premium, and testers who are not wholly devoted to the task at hand are quickly replaced.

Not playing, testing

The term 'Beta Tester' is somewhat misleading in that the duties of testers are far from restricted to the testing of Beta versions. Pre-Alpha, Alpha, Final Beta and Gold versions are also tested. Pre-Alpha and Alpha versions or 'builds' are in the most primitive stages of development, and hence often crash or lock up for myriad reasons. They are often no more than the most elementary incarnations of the game's engine, and sometimes lack coloured textures and NPC (non player character) AI. Beta builds are far more advanced versions of the game, and are often very similar to the finished product. When the title is considered complete, it is accorded Final Beta status. It undergoes additional testing before it becomes a Gold version. The Gold version

is then subjected to last minute testing before being sent off to the printer for duplication. This version is packaged into plastic cases or cardboard envelopes, then boxed along with the manual and other documentation for retail sale.

The ubiquitous patch

However, the work of testers does not cease once the title is released. No rest for the weary. The testing team then works closely with Technical Support staff to investigate and catalogue any bugs reported by consumers. The bug lists are sent to the programmers who work feverishly to develop a patch. Then the testing team tests the patch, before it is released to the public. This process continues if the release of multiple patches is required.

Video for polities

Testers have a number of additional duties, one of which is video capture of gameplay. Basic gameplay elements and very positive aspects of the game are captured in order to give those that view it a general idea of the game's features. This also gives the company an opportunity to place an emphasis on unique, particularly interesting or controversial game content. Mature content that may necessitate the award of an M15 rating (violence, sexual references and anything else that may arouse the ire of concerned parents and ignorant politicians) is also captured as part of standard procedure. The footage is then sent to the OFLC (Office of Film and Literature Classification) in order to fulfil

the legal obligation to assist them in classifying the game. It is also used in promotional material distributed to retailers and the press. Screenshots are taken for use in promotional material and box art, and testers also assist in the inception of retail and press competitions. Testers are also often called upon to design and compose game manuals and official strategy guides.

Foot in the door

For those who aspire to entering the games industry, becoming a tester is one of the best ways to do so. Testers have regular exposure to personnel from every level of the development, publishing and distribution process. In an industry that it undeniably incestuous, this represents an excellent opportunity for those with programming,

artistic or other abilities to market themselves directly to people who are constantly on the lookout for fresh talent. Testers are also privy to a flood of inside information including release dates, sales statistics for recently released games, and details concerning titles undergoing development in secrecy. This is definitely one of the great fringe benefits of working as a tester; especially for those who work for large publishing companies like Electronic Arts, Activision and GT Interactive. Testers often obtain this type of information months in advance of the press. However, all testers are subject to Non Disclosure Agreements that usually remain legally binding for several years.

Money money money

Testing is also somewhat lucrative, as most companies pay testers \$14 per hour or more for their services. Testers also accrue other excellent fringe benefits like getting games free or at least at cost price. Unfortunately, testing is very rarely full-time work and this can be a significant deterrent for some. While testing games is an extremely repetitive and often difficult process, the rewards far outweigh these drawbacks, and anyone who is offered such work would be wise to accept it.

Brett Robinson



Becoming a Beta Tester

In Australia, most developers, publishers and distributors are located in Melbourne and Brisbane. This is largely due to exorbitant real estate prices in the Sydney area. Electronic Arts and GT Interactive are based in Sydney, and use testers for in-house development. Companies like Stromlo Entertainment and several others are based in Melbourne, while Insomnia Entertainment, Dreamtime, Auran and others are based in Brisbane. Because of this isolation to the three major cities, it is markedly easier to gain employment as a tester here in Australia than it is in Europe or the US. The development and publishing industries are on the rise here, so an increase in demand for testing staff is inevitable.

While Electronic Arts Sydney and GT Interactive aren't looking to hire additional testing staff, EA Brisbane will be looking to hire testers upon completion of their development studio around June 1999. Those interested in becoming testers are encouraged to send details of their gaming experience and expertise to the companies listed above, and any others. While many may not require additional testers immediately, all applications are kept on file for future use.



21" DIGITAL MULTISCAN
COLOUR FST MONITOR

DON'T PLAY GAMES. LIVE THEM.

This monitor has a monster 21" screen, which is about as big as it gets. For gamers, that's about as good as it gets. The screen isn't just bigger, it's flatter too. There is no better upgrade you can make. You will no longer be merely playing games. You will be living them.

For more information please contact Customer Care on 132 600.

What's New
by
Panasonic

CRT TYPE	21" (20"/58.8 cm viewable) flat screen
DOT PITCH	0.25mm (H: 0.218 mm / V: 0.130mm)
SURFACE TREATMENT	Anti-glare, anti-static coating (AGRAS coat)
INPUT SIGNAL	
VIDEO	RGB analog

HORIZONTAL FREQUENCY	Operation range: 30.0 kHz to 95.0 kHz
VERTICAL FREQUENCY	Operation range: 58.0 Hz to 180.0 Hz
MAXIMUM PIXEL CLOCK	202.5 Mhz
MAXIMUM RESOLUTION	1600 dots (H) x 1200 lines (V)/75 Hz
DISPLAY AREA	392 x 294 mm (1600 x 1200)

*USER DEFINABLE TIMINGS Maximum pixel clock: 202.5 MHz;	
RESOLUTION	Maximum Refresh Rate (Hz)
1152 x 870	103
1280 x 1024	88
1600 x 1200	75

*The table above lists the maximum which the S110 will operate for several standard resolutions. Note that not all video cards are capable of operating at the S110's higher refresh rates.



UNCLASSIFIED

WAR GAMES

UNCLASSIFIED



Major Ian Lindgren examines the Military's million dollar simulators - and discovers that our \$90 PC games have all the right stuff

THERE ARE TWO PREEMINENT RULES IN PC BASED MILITARY SIMULATION: RULE 1: IF YOU HAVE A FAST COMPUTER, THE GREATEST SIM WILL CRIPPLE IT. RULE 2: IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE A FAST COMPUTER, SEE RULE 1.

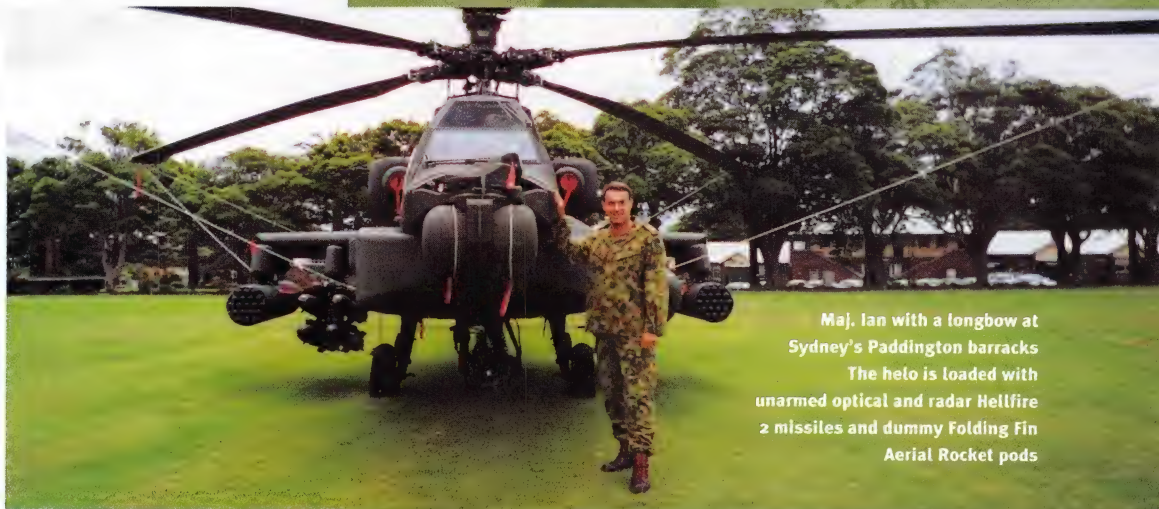
Under cover of this truism, and the ever increasing technology spiral that accompanies PC based military simulations, Ben asked me to write an article that gives us an indication of just how real PC based simulations are becoming. In other words, are we getting our "bang for our buck"? One word of warning though before you progress any further; this is acronym city, military jargon reigns supreme!

I dug deep, and as you could imagine, some of the material is sensitive, so it's taken me time to group together information that can be printed in PCPowerPlay. However, I really got a prod along in March, when an AH64D Apache Longbow landed next to my office at Victoria Barracks, Paddington.

The Boeing sales machine are marketing the Longbow Apache to the Australian Army as one of the contenders for the soon to be established Multi-Role Aviation Battalion. At \$40M a piece, it is a staggering weapons platform, with 28 times the combat power of the original Apache, and over 40 times the combat power of a conventional gunship.

As I sat down and watched the promotional video (yes they sell them just like DEMTEL sell knives and forks), I've got to be honest and say that my jaw hit the floor! It was immediately apparent that the only significant difference between the real capability of the AH64D Apache Longbow, and that simulated in Jane's Longbow 2, was that the 30mm cannon can accurately engage out to 4000m, whereas Jane's Longbow 2 limits this to 1500m. Does that surprise you? It excited me, and the "Sherlock Holmes" instinct in me said "Find out more and tell the story".

So, I'll now go on and discuss two games that are widely accepted as "hard core" military simulations, Jane's Longbow 2 and MicroProse's M1 Tank Platoon 2. I'll present what we see, and what the trained aviators and tankies see; you can make a judgement! We'll then take a close look at the multi-million



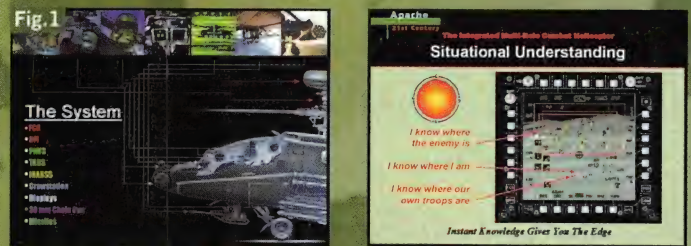
Maj. Ian with a longbow at Sydney's Paddington barracks
The helo is loaded with unarmed optical and radar Hellfire 2 missiles and dummy Folding Fin Aerial Rocket pods

dollar military simulators used in Australian and overseas defence forces, and compare how these shape up to our PC based sims.

Jane's Longbow 2

Let's take a quick peek at both cockpits. Quite a similarity here, with the major difference being the colour Multifunction Displays (MFDs) in the real AH64D. Colour MFDs are only a recent upgrade to the AH64D, and before that they were the standard green shade as depicted in Jane's game. Jane's did well here.

So what about avionics you ask? Well, as this image (see Fig.1) shows, the marketing department of Boeing is selling the combat multiplier factor inherent in the AH64D's Fire Control Radar (FCR), Target Acquisition & Designation System (TADS), Pilot Vision Night Goggles (PNVS) and Integrated Helmet and Display Sight System (IHADSS).



The Apache glossy brochure



(Itop) The real AH64D Cockpit and (above) the Jane's cockpit

This article is sourced from information supplied by the Australian Defence Force (including the Defence Science and Technology Organisation), US Military, UK Military and open source material from multinational companies specialising in military simulations. The content is UNCLASSIFIED; it presents no threat to Australia's national security, nor that of the United States or the United Kingdom.



The GPS from a real M1A2 tank



The M1 Tank Platoon 2 GPS

Did we have all this in the game...you bet we did! The only major system shown on the Boeing marketing image that was not included in the game is the Radar Frequency Indicator (RFI). In the real AH64D the RFI stores 150 radar signatures that can identify the location of a radar emission, name the weapon, identify friend or foe, and place the information on a MFD, and the IHADSS, in a microsecond. Was this information displayed in the game when the Air Survivability Equipment indicated a radar sweep? You bet it was. I guess Jane's felt that it was an underlying system that added too much complexity to the game, so its specific use was not included.

What about the FCR and TADS combination? In the real machine these work together to identify 100s of targets, then prioritise the top 150 for display on the MFD. Sound similar? In the PC world we could then draw a line around targets and allocate Priority Fire Zones and pass them off to our wingmen through the In Flight Data Link, then either lock on before or after launch. This is exactly how it works on the real helo. I saw it all on the promotional video. (insert Milsim9.bmp This image shows the Weapons MFD and Tactical Situation Display on the real AH64D. Insert Milsim10.bmp and Milsim11.bmp. These show the equal MFDs in the game)

So, all in all we don't score too badly in our PC world. Can we can spend \$89.95 and gain access to a degree of western

avionics expertise? Yes and no! What we get is a simulation of what the game's designers think the real weapons platform can do, and as you can see, they are not far off! What we don't get is the underlying technical "how does it work" data. Instead, the gaming engine references all the entities and displays it for us, whereas in real life, the avionics system uses highly classified secret methodologies to work it out and present it to the pilot and gunner.

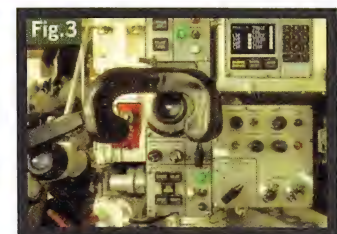
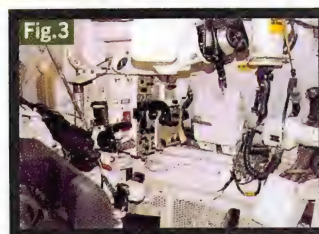
M1 Tank Platoon 2

Well, this one is not quite so easy to write up due the Force XXI issues that surround the M1A2 Abrams Main Battle Tank Upgrade. So we can only compare a number of issues. First up though lets look at the power position in the M1A2; straight through the Gunner's Primary Sight (GPS)!

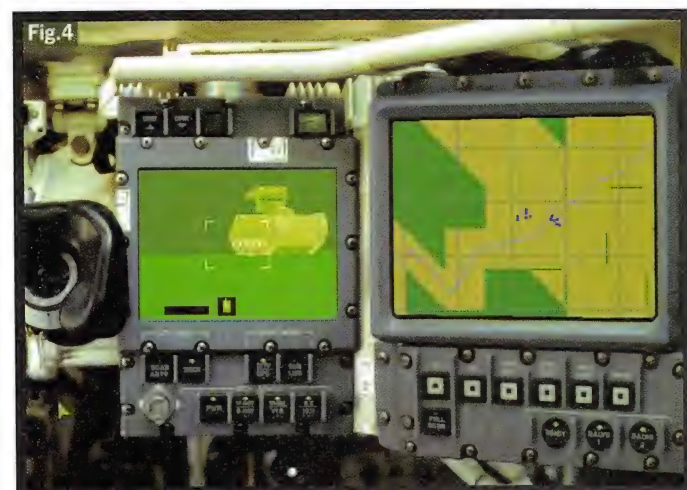
MicroProse have done a great job at simulating the GPS. (Fig.2) The same can be said of the gunner's crew position (Fig.3).

Next up is the venerable Commander's Integrated Display (CID) which incorporates the Commander's Independent Thermal Viewer (CITV) on the left, and the Inter-Vehicular Information System on the right. Again MicroProse have accurately reproduced the real thing! (Fig.4)

Once again we have done quite well in our PC gaming world...what we see is very close to the real thing. Now it's time to slip from "reality vs PC simula-



The Gunner's position from (left) a real M1A2 tank and (right) M1 Tank Platoon 2



The CID from (top) a real M1A2 tank and (above) M1 Tank Platoon 2

tion" to "multimillion dollar military simulations" vs "PC simulation". How well do the military simulate their hardware? So again we'll do the quick comparison between the same two games which act as our benchmarks.

The Apache Longbow

Fig.5 shows the Boeing Apache Longbow Crew Simulator where both gunner and pilot can rehearse drills and practice missions. This looks a little more fun than driving a PC with stick, throttle and peddles! What is more, the simulator even interacts with other simulators in the same way we do over LAN or Internet, and they even use TCP/IP as the communications protocol.

Hey! We are really losing out big time here, and it gets worse! Let's look at the US Army's SIMNET Project. SIMNET provides a virtual battlefield for Abrams crews to exercise in, without the wear and tear on the actual Main Battle Tank itself.

Fig.6 and Fig.7 show outside the hull views of SIMNET in use; in other words what we are see-

ing here is what any crew member sees on the screen through which they see the virtual world. I can't take you inside the virtual hulls, but we can compare the same outside the hull views with Mr Tank Platoon 2.(Fig.8)

Why is this you ask? The answer is a combination of the bureaucratic military acquisition cycle and the need to not just sit behind a PC and keyboard. Multimillion dollar military simulations are just that for a very good reason. You sit in a replica of the object you are simulating in order to achieve maximum realism in every drill. You know the saying "the quick or the dead"? It actually has real application on a battlefield, he who acts first lives to fight another day.

It is for this reason that, for example, in a real military main battle tank simulation you sit inside a hull, with working replicas of all the normal mechanisms to deal out precision delivered death on the battlefield. No matter what defence force you are in, acquisition cycles for these items take upwards of 15 years, so by the time the simulation equipment is installed, its graphics capabilities are well out of date. Companies like CAE are



assisting the military to overcome these shortfalls, and I'll describe this later.

However I can give you an example (Fig.9) of the British Challenger MBT simulator. Here the gunner is communicating with his crew commander, loader, and driver, and everything is as it is in the real MBT.

Other Forms of Tank Simulation

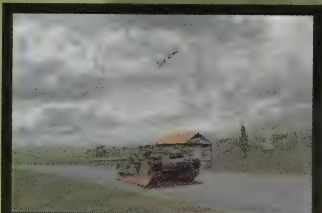
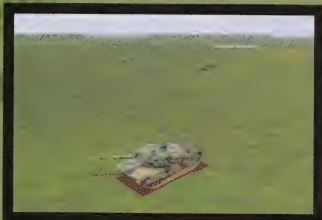
The Australian Army uses similar equipment at its Armour Training Centre for to train crews in the use of the Australian Light Armoured Vehicle (ASLAV) (Fig.10). Also here (Fig.11) we have two pictures of the Australian ASLAV Field Miniature Range (FMR) simulator where ASLAV turrets are fitted out with .22 sub calibre devices that simulate the 25mm Main Armament in the ASLAV. The left image shows the gunner and the right, a view of a turret from above.

A 20m sandpit is used to simulate terrain, and plastic tanks either sit stationary or move to act as targets. Through the modified sights, these look to be on a real battlefield, and this assists gunners in target identification and engagement. This sort of simulation is very cost effective when you compare the 5c cost of a .22 round to the minimum \$25 cost of 25mm ammunition.

This might lead you to the incorrect conclusion that the Australian Defence Force utilises more simplistic simulations, not so! The FMR is just one way to simulate warfighting at a very low cost. A high tech option is shown below.

The HMAS Watson Bridge Simulator

A visit to HMAS Watson was an interesting experience indeed! At \$8 million dollars value (excluding the building) the simulator was installed in 97/98 and



for all intents and purposes, while you are "on board", you feel like you are at sea!

The Bridge frame sits on top of a hydraulic base, and this allows the "ship" to pitch and roll up to 8 degrees. Not much you say, but add the ability of the "windows" to add a further 12 degrees pitch and roll and you have motion sickness at up to 20 degrees! This simulates life on board the Bridge as if the ship was conducting hard turns during war-like actions, or as shown in the image, delicate navigation exercises in confined areas.

The whole system includes 1 x main bridge with 250 degrees of view, 2 mini bridges with 120 degrees of view, and 6 blind bridges with a "birds eye" view. All can be linked together to practice students in operating as part of a Task Force off the coast of NSW.

Each "window", or channel as they are known, costs around \$7,000 and are powered by Pentium based PCs. I was treated to a simulated helicopter ride on a mini bridge, and this really showed the flexibility of a system designed for sea simulation! While the graphics were a little dated from what we are used to, the one thing that jumped out at me was the simulation of the sea state. It was amazing to see ships rising and falling with the waves; this is something that we do not see on PCs, and I think it is a feature we can expect in the future if companies like CAE have anything to do with it!

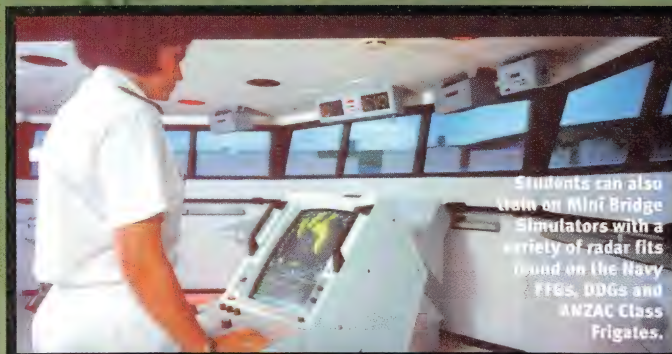
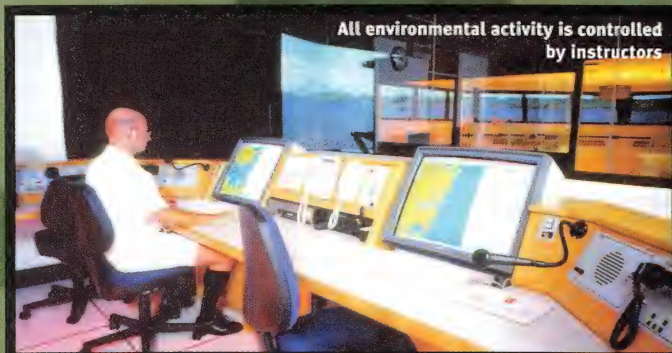
Interactive Tactical Environment Management System (ITEMS) - A CAE Product

After reading this element of the article, you are going to be asking, "When are CAE launching their first PC product?" I certainly was after being briefed on ITEMS.

ITEMS is a powerful and sophisticated Computer Generated Forces system that easily generates multi-sided conflicts and modern day warfare scenarios. The fundamental object within ITEMS is the entity. An entity is an intelligent air, ground or sea platform, which is used as a building block to configure scenarios.

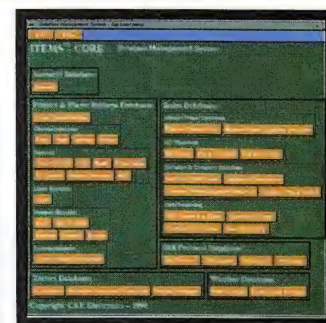
The user defines the mission by visual tools (2-D terrain map and 3D view) and pieces together the elements, materiel, command and control responsibilities and doctrines with easy to use editors to form an interactive real-time scenario. This is all managed on the core database in much the same way as we configure dynamic mission generators in advanced PC flight simulations such as Falcon 4.0, Total Air War and Longbow 2.

Scenarios created can range from a simple mission to a complex, fully interactive simulation that can stretch across nations by wide area network, from PCs to hydraulic simulators, to image generation and display simulators like the Maxvue system by



CAE. (Fig.12).

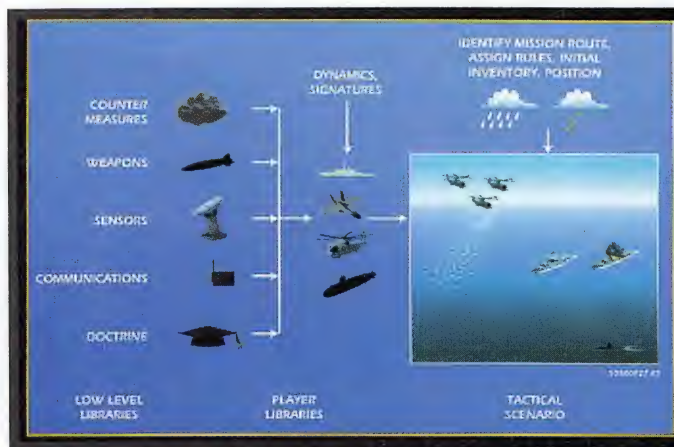
Maxvue will really get your blood pumping with image generation such as moving deck, low visibility, dynamic ocean effects as shown (Fig.13). Or perhaps sea state and rotor down wash effects as shown (Fig.14). CAE professional skills are used world wide in capabilities such as the US Army's Apache Longbow simulator, and the soon to be constructed Australian Blackhawk simulator.



The Core database manages all the entities in ITEMS



ITEMS creates 3D terrain and objects



ITEMS: A commercial off the shelf application that simulates an electronic battlefield at the Strategic, Operational and Tactical levels of Warfare



Thrustmaster Elite rudder pedals which have been modified to fit around the pedestal supporting the flat-panel display, and the collective control was made by fitting an industrial single axis joystick to a VN Commodore transmission selector lever! Aussie ingenuity!

I hope we'll see CAE move in to the gaming world and put competition on Jane's and MicroProse to give us what both companies are touting they'll introduce with Fleet Command and Gunship III respectively. That is, an integrated air, land and sea battle-space where gamers can play in any entity, in any physical environment.

Australia's Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO) - Warfighters and Scientists Working Together

The Australian Defence Force has its own world's best practice simulation with the DSTO Synthetic Environment Research Facility's Virtual Armed Helicopter. (Insert milsim39.bmp with caption: DSTO's Virtual Armed Helicopter.) This capability was recently used in conjunction with Restructuring of the Army Trials for tasking as though they were real assets in a Multi-Role Aviation Battalion during Exercise Phoenix. The helicopters flew in a 'virtual environment' created by DSTO that covered 100 x 100 km of terrain around RAAF Base Tindal in the Northern Territory.

The Virtual Armed Helicopter runs on Windows 95 with Pentium II 400 MHz PCs and 2 x 12 MB Voodoo 2 cards, 128 to 256 Mb of memory, 9 Gb hard disks with Ultra-Fast SCSI II interfaces. The cyclic stick is a Thrustmaster F-16 FLCS joystick. The pedals are

Are We Playing Games?

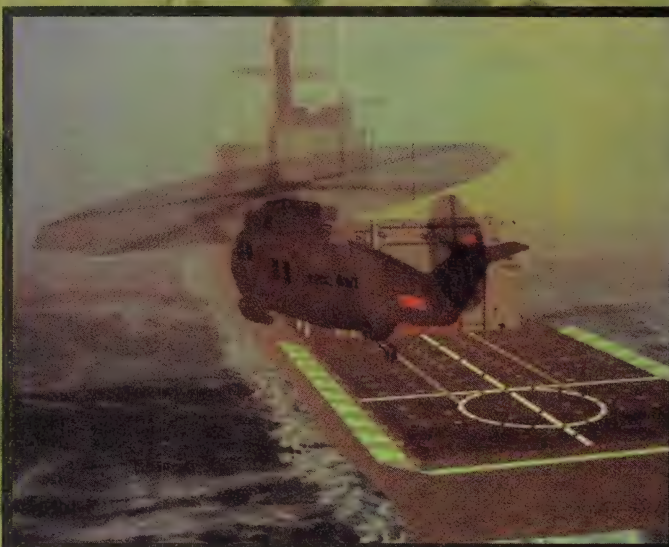
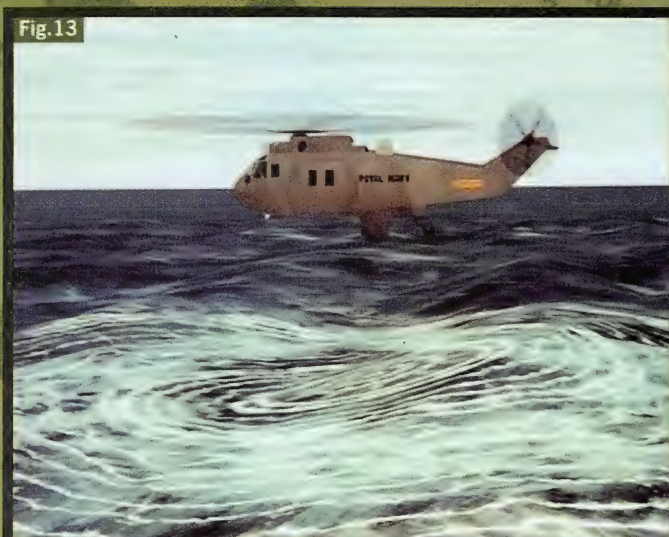
Well, I don't know about you, but I can see that the most realistic of PC based military simulations are very close to the real multimillion dollar items. Sure, we don't have all the associated hardware that sits around you in a helo, fighter or ship, but our visuals are right up there with the best!

I don't think we are playing games. DSTO will continue to assist the ADF in maintaining the "Knowledge Edge" in the Asia Pacific Region. The big companies will continue adopting our technology such as Pentium processors and Windows 98, rather than super computers and Unix. I can see a convergence of technology as CAE considers bringing its multimillion dollar intellectual property within the reach of gamers, and this will put pressure on Jane's, MicroProse and DID to give us improved games in a truly integrated environment.

One final comment; do you have a fast computer? If so, see Rule 1. It's not fast enough for the future of PC based military simulations.

By Major Ian Lindgren

Footnote: I WISH TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE AND COMPANIES FOR THEIR KIND ASSISTANCE WHILE I WAS RESEARCHING THIS TOPIC: MR MICHAEL BIDDLE OF CAE ELECTRONICS (AUSTRALIA). MR BOB MITCHELL - APACHE SALES MANAGER FOR BOEING, DR ANNE-MARIE GRISOGONO, MR STEVE BUTLER AND MS JANE BABBIDGE OF DSTO. PETTY OFFICER DEAN RUSSELL FROM HMAS WATSON, AND SOMEONE OF THE SAME UNIFORM, CORPORAL JASON LOGUE FROM THE ARMY NEWSPAPER UNIT. THANK YOU ONE AND ALL.





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The Interface

This month, we run through how to make some nifty background graphics for your in-game menus. By James McCutcheon

This month I am going to show you some simple tricks that can be done to make some background graphics that can be used for things like menus and scrolling surfaces for your games.

Now I do not have a artistic bone in my body, in fact my Year 7 arts teacher is probably still in rehab, but you still can make some decent graphics if you know how. All you need to get hold of is a good quality graphics package such as Adobe's Photoshop which I used to create the effects shown in this article.

A tile is a graphic that like its name suggests can be drawn next to itself to fill an area. The trick to these graphics are that when this is done no "seams" or edges are seen. The bigger image seems like one picture but really its made up of many other smaller pictures. Windows uses this concept for wallpaper on your desktop. The fact that you see no seams is important as this makes the larger surface look more realistic. The tiling concept is also used in 3D models for floors and ceilings, these things do not really change much and you save your self lots of memory by reusing the same graphic. Next time you play Doom have a look at the floors and ceilings - you will see what I mean. In a later article I will show you how to make your own tiles.

The first thing to do is find a background tile that suits the theme to your game. Mine is going to be a space theme so we are going to go for that generic metallic granite look (see pic 1 one below). There are plenty to download from the internet just have a good look around I am sure you will find one that will meet your needs. Do not forget to send the person who was kind enough to give the bitmap away an email to say thanks.

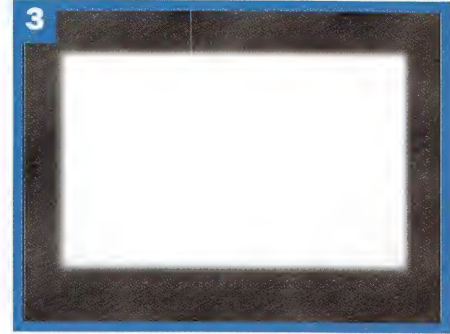
The next thing to do is tile the graphic so that it takes up the complete background surface. If the tile is not perfect the edges might give some seams. If this happens then the tile will look a bit rough so use a smudge tool that comes with the graphics package to blend in the edges. This might take a few goes to make it look right so save often so you do not have to go over your work too often.

Now we have our panel background we need to build a screen into the granite. We need to make the screen look like it is recessed, this is done by "feathering" the edge of the screen with a suitable colour



which in this case is black to give the desired 3D effect. This can be done with an airbrush tool in most graphic packages or with the fill command with Photoshop. Always use the airbrush in these situations not a line draw as the line draw gives a too sharp an edge which does not give a feel of depth to the effect.

Next step is to make our screen look a bit more, well, screenish. Most futuristic computers have lines and green fonts like an Apple II for some strange reason so who are we buck that trend? Lines are again another tile but this time we use the layering feature. Layering is just dictating which image appears above another. Here we have given the "screen" precedence above the grid lines which gives the desired effect. The text is



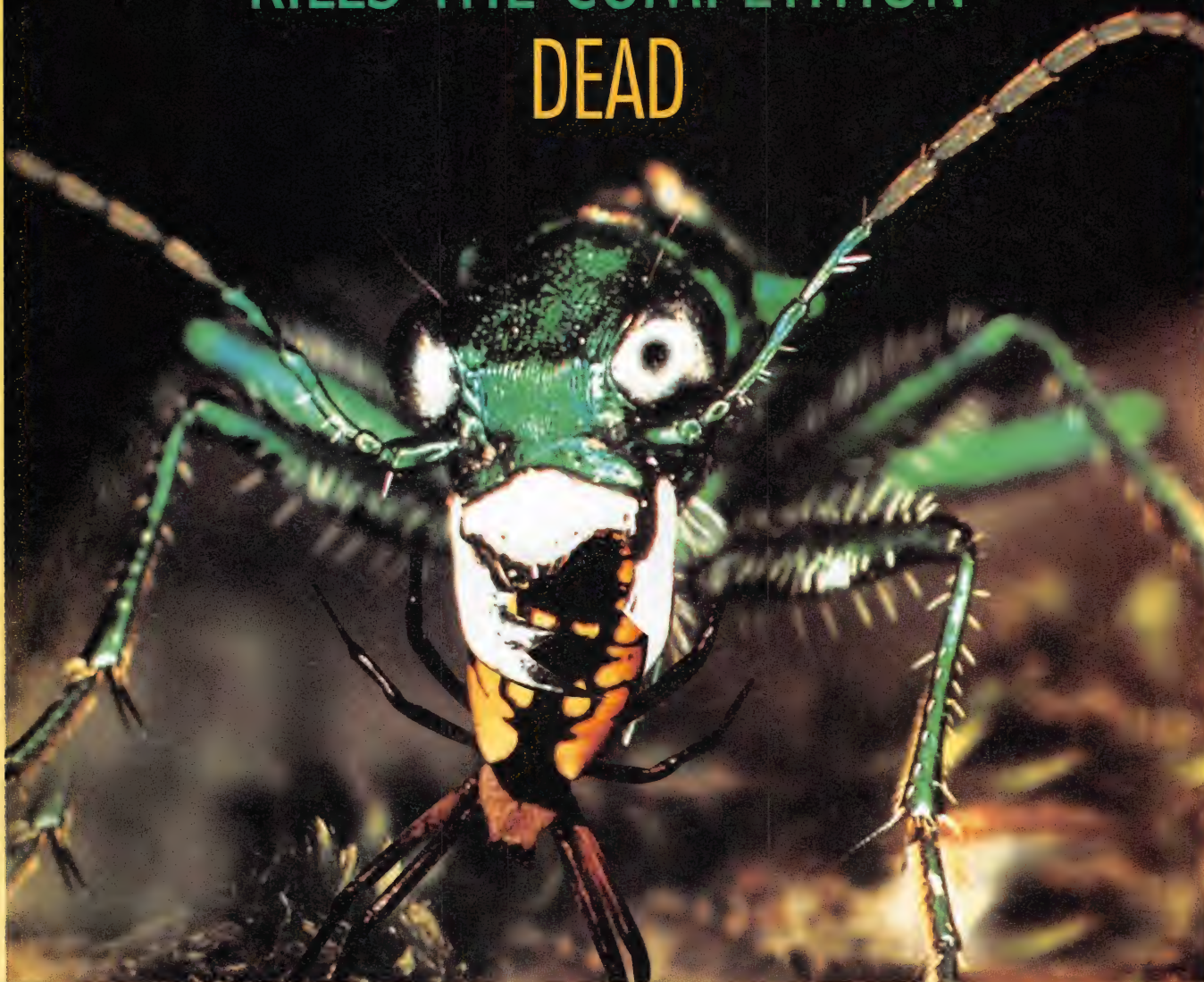
added by using the standard text feature.

Add some extra graphics like pipes and buttons and now we have a pretty good screen that's ready to be animated.



LEADTEK

KILLS THE COMPETITION DEAD



Winfast 3D S320

Based on the acclaimed 128-bit NVIDIA RIVA TNT chip, the S320 is a true 2D/3D card which comes standard with 16Mb SDRAM, and twice the fill rate of a Voodoo2.

'On our 3D WinMark tests, (the WinFast 3D S320) was in the top tier... The card aced our suite of game tests, delivering exceptionally crisp and clean rendering on D3D-based games.' — *PC MAGAZINE AUSTRALIA (Editor's Choice)*

'TNT outpaced Voodoo2 on six of six tests and finished well ahead in the overall score.' — *Gamespot UK*



Winfast 3D S310

Fully compatible with Voodoo 3D, Voodoo Glide and Direct 3D, the S310 is based around the 3Dfx Voodoo Banshee and is an affordable choice for gamers who want maximum compatibility and minimum price.

With a raw fill rate that's higher than Voodoo 2's, and doing away with the need for separate video and accelerator cards, the Banshee-based S310 is an unstoppable 2D/3D gaming card.

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 **Leadtek**

STATE OF PLAY

The lowdown on the latest in your favourite genre

Adventure/RPG

David Wildgoose

What I'm waiting for:

Big Brother - June

Liath - July

Gabriel Knight 3 - August

The Longest Journey - October

Trecision, Italian developers of last year's *Nightlong*, have begun work on the provisionally-titled *WM*. With two main characters (a male and a female), an Austrian castle for a setting, and a plot that encompasses conspiracy theories and the supernatural, you could be forgiven for thinking this was Gabriel Knight meets The X-Files. *Nightlong* was an underrated game, so let's hope *WM* (or whatever it will be called) brings Trecision the kind of praise and attention they deserve.



Poland is the unlikely location where a new game entitled *The Prince & The Coward* is currently being created. It's a fantasy adventure about a young boy whose soul becomes trapped in the body of a prince. Hmm, well, it's a start, I suppose. Obviously a set-up that might produce some humour and, if it's aimed at a younger audience, may well prove a success. Developed by Metropolis, but no sign of a publisher as yet. Somewhat more promising is *Traitor's Gate* from Daydream. And, no, it's not the sequel to *Baldur's Gate*. Instead, we have another break-in and steal stuff adventure from the people who brought us *Safecracker*. Only this time, however, you'll be turning your thieving to the Tower of London. Realism is a priority, both in terms of the detail of the environment and the degree of interaction within. Here's hoping Daydream have at least had a look at *Thief* and realised the crap, abstract puzzles of *Safecracker* were hardly the stuff of thrilling, suspenseful gameplay.

Without doubt the oddest news this month concerns the latest *Simon The Sorcerer* game from Headfirst Productions. Departing hugely from the point-and-click foundations of the first two games, the third in the series will be a 3D action/adventure with plenty of jumping, fighting and a few scraps of puzzle-solving and story-telling for which adventurers can forage. Any game that could claim to mixing Mario and Zelda is worthy of interest, of course, but is it still an adventure game? Early impressions suggest not. So, unless indications are given otherwise, that's the last you'll hear of Simon 3 here.

Action

Ed Dawson

This month we expected to get the hal-lowed *Quake3*. We didn't. Instead we have a whole armful of other, very cool, stuff!

Kingpin, from Xatrix Entertainment is a poverty-driven broken-bottle violence episode, filled with gritty expendable characters and deadpan hip-hop dialogue. It's got emotion-based conversation, and features sidekick AI characters as a major part of the gameplay. A cool and logical progression into a deeper style of first person game. And it's infested with two-dollar cutthroats that will bring out the killer instinct in anyone.

<http://www.xatrix.com>

Unreal Tournament is a fully-patched up, polished edition of the fantasy adventure game, with a total multiplayer focus. We didn't see



that one coming! Featuring very nice gameplay scenarios and improved Bot AI, this is the demon juice for Unreal followers. In particular one map has one team defending a fortress on a beachhead, firing down on the poor invading team floundering in the water ala the sickening opening scene from *Saving Private Ryan*. Except you're armed with a golden rock-spitting hydraulic thing instead of an M1 carbine. And you're wearing sexy silver boots over a neon jumpsuit. At least you'll make an attractive corpse. It's in final stages now and should be out real soon. <http://www.unreal.com>

But never mind the lightweight crap, the total doozey this month for action was the shock release of a game based on the *Aliens* movies (with Sigourney Weaver, et al) that was not, actually, complete manure! Incredible! Before you shake your head in disbelief, believe this: *Aliens vs. Predator* has got one of the best lighting systems I've ever seen in any game. It's utterly faithful to the films and stacked with scenes, interactive objects and imagery from both series. You play one of three things: a human marine wielding ANY of the guns out of "Aliens", the supremely powerful Predator complete with multiple vision modes and head-mounted laser targeting, or a murderous, mindless Alien where lightning speed, wall-clinging spider skills and crushing physical strength are yours. All this in superb environments, a kickassedly fast 3D engine and fantastic models with location-based injury modelling. Plus three distinct single-player adventures. Time to drool, gents. <http://www.foxinteractive.com>

Strategy

Brett Robinson

Current Game Versions:

Total Annihilation: 3.1
Starcraft: 1.04
Age of Empires: 1.0b
Myth 2: v1.2
Alpha Centauri: 3.0

The popularity of squad based strategy titles is ever increasing, with several titles currently in development. The strategy game industry being what it is, most are carbon copies of one another. However, certain titles have garnered reputations as more than just clones, one of which is **Shock Troops**. The game will be set in the tumultuous post-Y2K period, where two multinational corporations have capitalised on the ensuing panic and



confusion. G-Soft and TriCyber become the largest corporations in existence, eventually using their scientific expertise in not-so-legal ways. G-Soft uses its biochemical synthesis techniques to enhance and control their soldiers, while TriCyber counters with the production of its own cybernetically enhanced soldiers. With each company attempting to subvert the other, all out war is not far off.

The game will feature full 3D terrain, units and objects, as well as a free roaming camera. The campaign will be fully dynamic, and players will have the ability to pause the game and re-issue unit orders. Using a unique interface, the player will also be able to synchronize unit actions and queue unit commands in a manner very similar to Total Annihilation's system. With very impressive visuals, Shock Troops will be one to look out for late this year when it is expected to be released.

Another 3D strategy title which has gone largely unnoticed is **Braveheart**. Based partly on the movie of the same name, the game will allow players to engage in savage combat on the lush battlefields of 12th century Scotland. Eidos are attempting to make the game as historically accurate as possible. As such, there will be 16 playable clans and 200 others for the player to ally or fight with. The game will feature multiple campaigns with goals such as uniting all the clans under one banner, and conquering England. 20 unit types, including heavy cavalry and siege equipment, and the addition of huge fortresses mean this game has huge potential. Keep an eye out for it when it hits stores in a few months.

Sims

Maj. Ian Lindgren

As the 1999 Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) draws closer, the 'hot goss' on games development is starting to dry up as each software house tries to keep their games a secret just that little bit longer, so they can score the points at E3. We've got the goods for you though.

Big news from Hasbro Interactive (formerly known as MicroProse). Just as they did with European Air War last year, Hasbro are developing a king hit to knock the socks off all WWII flight sims. **B-17 'The Mighty Eighth'** is planned for release in September/October 1999. The game will focus on both online and offline gameplay, and you'll be able to fill any of the positions in a B17 from nose to tail. What's



more, other players will be able to fly with you in formation in other B17s, or against you in fighters to attack your aircraft or your formation. Is this awesome or is it what! Just imagine the technology required to keep track of all those entities in a virtual world. Hasbro are so impressed with the game design so far that a follow on project has already been commissioned for 2000! I'll keep you posted on this one, and my feeling is that we'll see it on the shelves in November.

Also due out at the same time from SSI is **Silent Hunter II**. This will feature a dynamic campaign with "the most detailed and realistic environment yet seen in a naval simulation." Cooperative multiplayer mode will allow players to form "Wolfpacks" and take on enemy convoys. A mission recorder, and a scenario and patrol editor are planned, and these items will make it a comprehensive game.

A little more intel on **IL-2 Sturmovik** by Maddox Games confirms a November release date. I've seen shots of "real time sun flashes" on the glass element of the cockpit and brilliant graphics from Voodoo 3 and Riva TNT Cards. We may never have heard of Maddox games before, but I'd say by Christmas this game will be hot property.

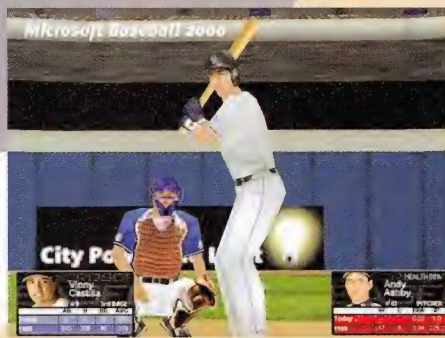
Finally, a new patch for **Jane's WWII Fighters** is available at <http://www.janes.ea.com>. The patch gives long awaited force feedback support, new wingman commands, mission editor hotkeys and some other minor fixes and tweaks.

Sports

Gareth Jones

Microsoft has had a rather steep learning curve, with many of their previous seasons efforts being pretty laughable, but their '2000' releases are really looking interesting. Lets start with **Microsoft Baseball 2000** - MS Baseball 99 wasn't terrible, but was nowhere near as accomplished or as much fun as a raft of other 'Ball titles. MSB 2000, however, looks like it's going to be a hell of a lot better. Interestingly, it seems as though Microsoft are pitching it towards casual fans of the game rather than the hard core, and they're making plenty of noise about how easy it will be to use, how easy baserunning will be and so on, and it looks as though it's going to be priced rather attractively too.

And then there was **Microsoft's NBA Full**



Court Press - which again was, to put it kindly, a little below average. Undeterred, this year they're working on **NBA Drive 2000**. And...hmmm, again the MS press releases are lauding the ease with which people can play the game, how simple it is, yet how pretty it will look. And then there's the bargain price they're likely to go for. Hey, y'know I just had a thought - Deer Hunter (et al) sold about a billion copies, and it was easy to get into, and relatively cheap too. What a coincidence, eh?

But not all of Microsoft's games look as though they'll fit into this niche - we've been having a look at **Midtown Madness**, their driving sim-ish game, and it looks pretty special. The graphics are top-notch, and the gameplay is an interesting 'open-ended' kind of 'do what you want' affair - and this includes some pretty nefarious stuff (but of course, the cops will chase you down, just like in 'The worlds wackiest police chases'). It's kinda like Carmageddon without pedestrians, and with consequences.

Apparently EA have just decided to cancel **World Cup Cricket** for the PlayStation, so the only place to play it's going to be your PC - and believe me, if you like cricket, you're going to want to play it.

There's a patch out for **AFL 99** too, which addresses some of the problems with the game (finally!). Fixes include things like interchange numbers, savegame problems, and those of you without hardware acceleration will now be able to see fights (yay!).

Driver

Category Driving
Players 1
Publisher GT Interactive
Available 3rd Qtr 99

Bend a coat hanger around the criminal elements of DMA's classic Grand Theft Auto, insert it inside the door of Stunt Island's player-directed cinematic set-pieces, jimmy it through the car chase action of geriatric arcade racer Chase HQ and - hey! - you'll soon be the (illegal) owner of Reflections latest driving game. As long as you can work out how to hotwire, that is.

Hoon!

Driver maintains Reflections tradition of being very, well, untraditional with their creations. If Destruction Derby kick-started their reputation for somewhat less than conventional driving games, then Driver (not to mention Destruction Derby 2, obviously) could only confirm it.

You're an undercover cop investigating typically nefarious happenings in lowlife America. Infiltrating a gang as their get-away driver, you are confronted with the enviable job of motoring at breakneck speed through the streets of New York, Miami, Los



No, it's not Miami Vice: The Game - but wouldn't that be nice!

Destruction Derby never had more than an adequate driving model. If Driver is to succeed, Reflections will need to come up with something vastly superior. Indications are that they acknowledge this and, indeed, Driver will feature a completely new driving model. Sure, it will still be a heavily action-oriented game, yet, at this stage, at least it looks like being a good one.

Sorry, can't hang round too long - here come the cops! Dammit, how do I hotwire this thing again?

scripted and edited later to impress your friends. It's not entirely impossible to imagine that this was how the lamentable Ronin was made.

As good as yer granny

The burning question among all players of previous Reflections games is whether they have improved the driving model. Even for an action game,



Angeles and, of course, San Francisco. Apparently, every effort has been made to ensure that each city is as lifelike as possible, with up to thirty miles of roadway and accurate reproductions of the buildings and other scenery along the way. The pursuit of realism also extends to a fully functioning traffic light system and plenty of innocent, law-

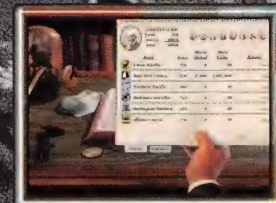
abiding drivers who respond to such things in the appropriate manner. Unlike you, natch.

Magic Mirrors

In addition to the action of the main game, you can also create your own film sequences by positioning cameras throughout the city to capture your exhilarating escapades. These can then be



RAILROAD TYCOON II



MISSION PACK OUT NOW
'Railroad Tycoon II: The Second Century'



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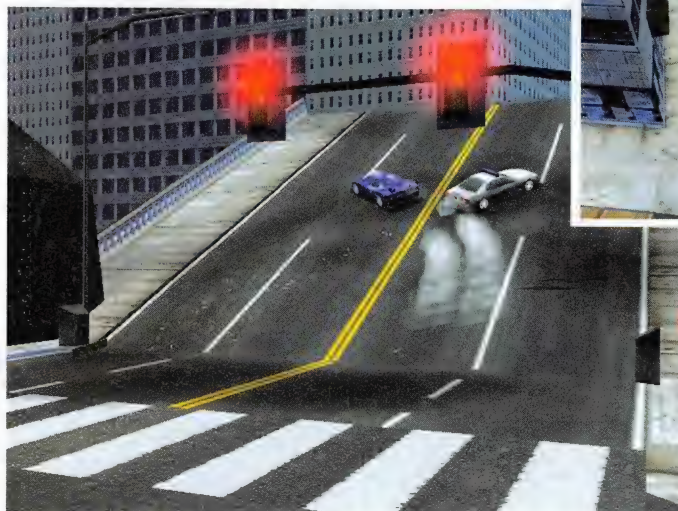


Midtown Madness

Category Racing
Players 1-8
Publisher Microsoft
Available 3rd Qtr 99

Prior to its unfortunate lapse into arcade mediocrity, the Need for Speed series (well, the very first of the series really), shone for one simple reason: you could snot through cityscapes, outrunning the cops and side-swipe oncoming civvie vehicles. This anti-social style of driving instantly appealed to the frustrated driver in all of us. Witness the success of the Carmageddon series and you can see that EA had a winner on their hands with the first incarnation of NFS.

What we really want, is not outrageous fantasy cardeath on a



grand scale, but merely to drive around normal streets, in normal cars, but as obnoxiously as possible. Now just such a game is coming - and from which hardcore, 'damn the rules' gameco? Why, Microsoft, of course.

In keeping with attaching the 'Madness' moniker to anything vehicular, Microsoft have shrewdly labelled this one "Midtown Madness". What

they've come up with is a reasonable car-physics model, but more impressively for the player, is that the entire (suburbs not included) city of Chicago is recreated for you to rip through. That, it seems, means a regulation grid of U.S. streets, perforated occasionally by drawbridges - in action! Yes! Long we've waited to let rip across a raising drawbridge, and thanks

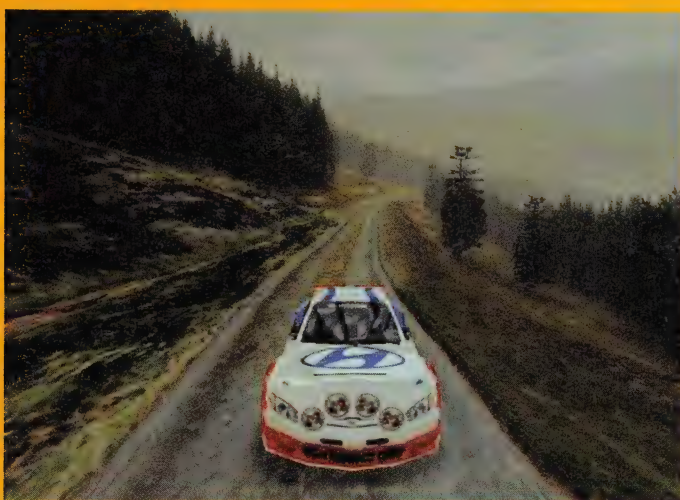


The word was clearly out - a new PowerPlay had just hit the newstand

to the subversives at Microsoft, now we can. Apart from that, Chicago is a pretty dull city for road carnage, but others will come, with London planned as the next add-on.

Microsoft have licensed real car names too, which is a nice change. Several racing modes, supporting both multi (hello Zone!) and single players. Engine sounds were a bit lame, but seeing as I was shown this game by the developer, I shook him violently until he agreed that meaty engine sounds were critical. Good fun is to be had with this game, we can't wait until the final version shows up.

Rally Championship 99



"Where are we Mike?"
 "F*#led if I know, Mal"

Category Rally sim
Players 1-TBA
Publisher Europress
Available 3rd Qtr 99

Yay! Rally Rally Rally! Europress have been perfecting the art of the Rally sim for a long time now - since 1986 - and this, the fifth instalment in the series, really does look set to blow away the competition. Their previous efforts had been largely

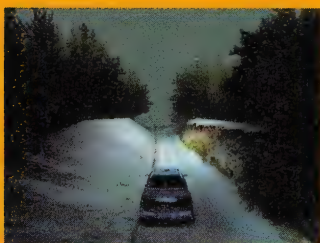
excellent, and were let down only by a few flaws and omissions - and then along came Colin McRae Rally, which set a new standard. Undaunted, Europress remained hard at work, and RC99 should better all previous efforts if it lives up to its potential.

The developers have gone to great lengths to get a realistic feel - even to the extent of taking video of the actual cars as they travel around the courses to get the correct scenery and things like the road widths and so on - where necessary using still photography. And then there's the sound, an often underrated and overlooked aspect of realism in a sim. Well, with RC99 you'll know you're hearing the real thing, because again the developers popped out to the rally courses and recorded the sounds from all the different cars, all the backfires, engines revving, tyres squealing and so on. Impressive, huh? The cars, too, are all realistic simulations of the actual cars. Seeing as Europress obtained the official license for the 'Mobil 1 British Rally



Championship', they've been out to the different car manufacturers get all the necessary data for life-like simulations of the cars' layouts, capabilities, and behaviour.

Rather than the approach used in many other rally sims to date whereby you're actually driving in between invisible walls, Europress have gone with a 'free roaming' model. Essentially, this seems to mean that you're free to drive off the beaten track, if you wish. It does raise the very arcade-y prospect of shortcuts and secret areas, but it also means that if you screw up and miss a corner, you're going to have to do some pretty hard work to get back on track. Add to this a dynamic weather model that will actually affect the way you need to set up your car rather than just being eye-candy, as well as the lovely animation and 3D acceleration, and you'd be hard-pressed not to be excited about this.



Discworld Noir

Category Adventure
Players 1
Publisher GT Interactive
Available Mid 99

Grim Fandango provided the adventure game genre a much needed kick up the bum. It was bound to, because when you think about it - no one does it quite like LucasArts does.

That is, except for Perfect Entertainment. While they may not be as well known as LucasArts nor have produced the same number of hits, their contribution to adventure-comedy is undisputed. They're responsible for the Discworld games, which so far has consisted of two titles (Discworld and Discworld II: Missing Presumed?) which were based on Terry Pratchett's "unique brand of humour" and the Discworld series.

Discworld Noir is the third in the series, and will follow Grim Fandango's kick up the bum with a bit of a jostling shove. It brings with it a completely new plot - with the game's protagon-

ist also being a new addition to the Discworld universe. Playing as Lewton PI, you take what seems to be a straightforward case from a blonde bombshell. In true film noir fashion, the plot twists around a bit and thickens - till you don't know which way is up or down.

The characters and Ankh Morpork itself (where Discworld Noir is set) are now rendered fully in 3D. Apart from this obvious departure from adventure game tradition, Discworld



Noir will call upon your detective skills much more than simple object acquiring.

This is what happens when you eat "Chilli 'ala Castle"

One of the more exciting aspects of Discworld Noir is that it features a dynamic dialogue system. Take a certain approach with a particular character, and it'll affect what they'll choose to say to you. Not just within the current conversation either - but during the entire game too! So if you decide to play the polite detective, you'll see a different side of Ankh Morpork than if you chose the 'Bad Cop' routine. There are plenty of avenues to explore, though these will all converge to bring you the story's grand finale.



System Shock 2

Category Action
Players 1-8
Publisher Looking Glass
Available June

Exciting times in the Powerplay office this month as we were granted a tantalizing glimpse of the new Looking Glass game in the shape of an early alpha version of System Shock 2. Initial impressions indicate the modified Dark Engine is equally at home in detailing the clean, shiny interiors of a spaceship as it was discerning the steampunk environs of Thief.

Likewise, the interface has undergone some alterations to accommodate the more complex demands of System Shock 2's role-playing leanings. Inventory screens and other panels pop up frequently, yet importantly the elegance of Thief's "highlight" method of object interaction has been retained.

Perhaps greater interest, how-



ever, concerns the game's setting and consequent novel integration of an RPG-style character creation into the actual gameplay. Awakening after some unspecified force (Shodan?) hijacked the space station you call home, you learn that you volunteered to receive some experimental cybernetic implants in the hope of



being able to use them to defeat this mysterious force. The early stages of the game have you working out how these implants function and using your limited

resources and knowledge to enhance them. There are four types of implant and the ones you choose to pursue will determine the nature of your character. It's really awfully clever.

On a slightly bizarre final note, I was immediately struck by the similarity of the title screen to the cover artwork on the new TLC album. Irrelevant, but kinda cool all the same.

David Wildgoose



Live Wire

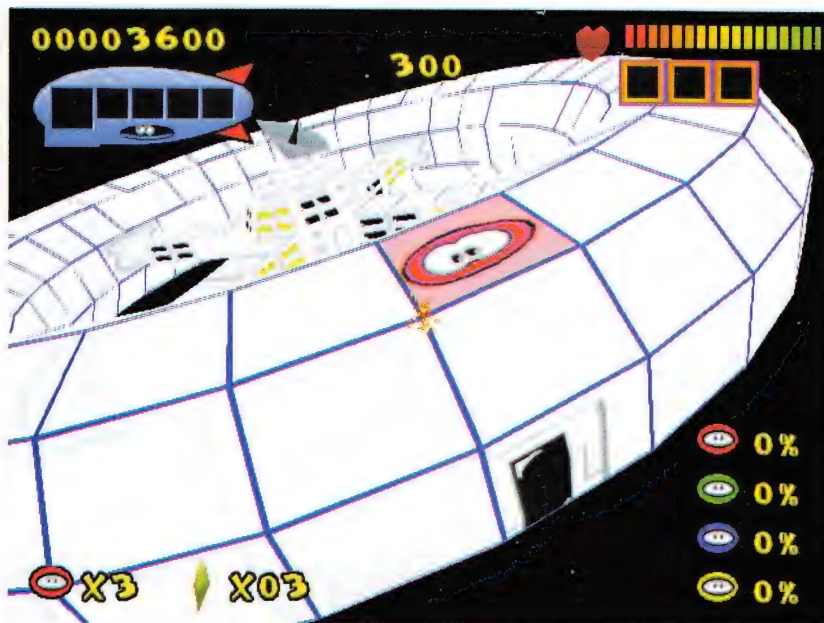
Category Puzzle Action
Players 1-TBA
Publisher SCI/Code Monkeys
Available Mid 99

As they say, there's a fine line between madness and genius. A good example of this is Tetris. In subzero conditions on the steppes of Russia's heartland, a man came up with a game idea where blocks, dropping ever so persistently from above, arranged in a special sequence, would remove parts of these blocks, so that you can do this all over again.

Some people labelled him a madman. If you were to read a short synopsis of the game,

you'd most likely come to the same conclusion. But to many people (we're talking millions upon millions here) Tetris was sheer brilliance. Inducing severe cases of mind-numbing addiction in those who ventured to pick this thing up, Tetris spawned a revolution. And hundreds of cheap and crappy rip-offs, natch.

Live Wire is the next puzzle game to come our way and first impressions are good - there are a number of things in its favour. Firstly there's no apparent game that LW has been modelled on. This is almost always a good thing. Secondly, the gameplay - when written on paper and taken out of context - would be considered a matter of lunacy.



As a little mouse/mechanical object, you run a around a grid leaving a trail specific to your mouse's colour. A lot of things change colour for no apparent reason, plenty of unexpected noises sound off at (seemingly) inappropriate moments, and most of the moving objects hardly fall into any discernible classes.

And yet it's so much fun, and dangerously addictive. The overall aim is to "own" as much real

You're a robotic gerbil running around a ring - what was the man thinking!?!

estate as possible. To help this, there are weapons and power-ups littered throughout each intricately designed course.

Live Wire is fast and has all the necessary ingredients to ensure a following (in at least the most obsessive puzzle-freak circles). Long live the addictive puzzle game!

Legacy of Kain - Soul Reaver

Category Action/RPG
Players 1
Publisher Crystal Dynamics
Available 3rd Qtr 99

Wow we like this! A plot where the perpetrators of evil attribute their deeds to necessity and further resolve that any other action taken against humanity is nothing but a product of boredom.

Refreshing to say the least. No one had their favourite teddy stolen at age four, no one was brought up the wrong way, and no one responded badly to being fed kippers and rye for breakfast for a sustained period of time. That is, no soddy excuses as to why the Vampires are undertaking some of the most horrendous

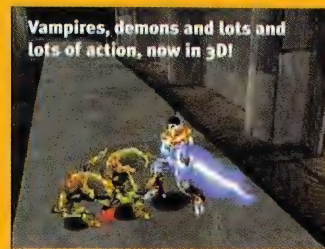
crimes against the common folk.

Actually, the story behind Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver is riveting stuff. Nosgoth is now under Kain's command. Vampires dominate and rule the lands. As the first lieutenant under Kain and member of the Council (affectionately known as Raziel), you've been banished by Kain for being given the mark of the gifted before he was bestowed with the honour. Kain, being the poor sport that he is, orders you to be cast into the Lake Of Lost Souls (remember, water and Vampires don't mix). You are discovered by The Elder - an entity that feeds on the souls of Nosgoth, that has had slim pickings since Kain rose to power (detailed in Blood Omen -



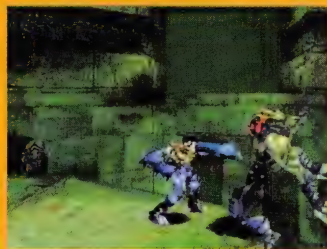
Legacy of Kain). The Elder offers you redemption, after of course you end the destructive reign of Kain the only way possible...

Soul Reaver marks a radical departure from its predecessor in terms of presentation. Soul Reaver is now fully 3D, with all the accelerated trimmings (drop-dead gorgeous visuals, and yes, plenty of moody coloured lighting). Dropping the overhead third person perspective, SR brings the



camera to the over the shoulder mount - which completely opens up the game world. For those that played the original, SR is almost unidentifiable as the next instalment in the series.

This one's for action fans who don't mind a bit of fantasy chucked in (you know, spells, swords and all that), and for those who love a huge helping of storyline and plot with their action.



Mars Maniacs

Category Racing
Players 1-8
Publisher Church of Electronic Entertainment
Available Mid 99

The first thing you notice about Mars Maniacs is the incredible sense of speed that pulls you in and sucks you under. From the moment you hit the accelerate key and glide off down the perfectly convoluted race track, it becomes abundantly clear that Mars Maniacs already has what it takes (even in beta form) to become an exceptional racing experience.

Part of the charm is the stunning graphics on display. Set in the future on and around Mars, the racing tracks twist and turn their way through some of the most intricately designed landscapes seen in a racing game. And no matter how fast you're going, the outdoor environments glide by so smoothly that experiencing motion sickness in Mars Maniacs becomes (almost) inevitable.

The reason for this is the exceptional code behind the graphics and gameplay. While the engine hasn't been designed to simulate faultless realism (Powerslide comes to mind as a great example of this), Mars Maniacs has been designed for pure speed. Average beginner speeds hover around the 250kph mark, with the developers claiming that the more experienced racers will be able to push upwards of 1000kph - with the player aware of such speeds the entire time. The speed of your hover car automatically increases throughout every lap, however hit the railing or another vehicle and you plonk back down to a more restrictive racing speed. So to reach excessive and break-neck speeds, Mars Maniacs encourages a near faultless run of a lap. There are no weapons or power-ups to collect in MM (though there is a limited speed boost button - which makes overtaking particularly spectacular and tense). In this way, CEE have designed MM to be a pure,



These shots are a bit Wipeout-esque, but the sheer speed and smoothness is beyond compare

hard-core racing game.

Church Of Electronic Entertainment, a group of Scandinavian developers that have chosen Australia to base their operations (the heat being a big part of the decision making process), developed the Mars Maniacs engine in-house. Sitting proudly next to Ratbag's Powerslide, Australia can now boast two of the most impressive racing engines seen in the world. Full review soon.





Gubble

Zymbotquest

One of the cutest purple characters to ever come along has just landed on your PC Screen!

Meet Gubble, he's not from around here!

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- One of the most addictive games to ever be released for PC!




Cricket World Cup 99

Category Cricket Sim
Players 1-TBA
Publisher EA Sports
Available Very soon

Well! As you're reading this, it will almost be June - and that means it will almost be time for the World Cup to begin. What better time to release a cricket game - especially one completely focused upon the World Cup.

Now, Warney Cricket is good, let there be no doubt about it. And EA's previous cricket titles have been a little...mediocre, so you might be excused for thinking that this is not something to get extremely excited about. You'd be wrong though - very, very wrong.

This time the developers behind the game are English-based Creative Assembly, the

same guys responsible for AFL 98 and 99. They've started from scratch to create an entirely new game - and it boasts an extremely impressive feature list (bar one very important aspect, but more on that anon). A top quality 3D engine is just the beginning, albeit an impressive beginning as the screen shots attest. Motion capture for a total of 600 player moves, a sophisticated AI that reacts and responds to the current match situation, commentary from the one and only Richie Benaud (god bless 'im!) and David Gower, a choice between arcade and simulation modes, the official licenses for the teams, the ovals, and even the umpires - so it will stay true to EA's "if it's in the game, it's in the game" maxim.

And most interesting of all is the 'live update feature' that EA are promising. During the World Cup, you will be able to log on to EA's site and download a current



The animation is so realistic you keep waiting for the ad break

roster for the teams, including up to the minute injuries, statistics, pitch conditions, weather, and so on - very, very cool.

There is a downside - and it's the same as (nearly) always for EA games: NO TCP/IP PLAY!! Bah! It's frustrating, but even so this does look to be a most excellent game.



Conquest

Category Real time Strategy
Players 1-8
Publisher Microsoft/
 Digital Anvil
Available 3rd Qtr 99

The PCPP crew have long agreed that a sci-fi RTS with a true 3D field of play would be a marvellous thing. A bit of a gaming holy grail, no less. Looming on the horizon are two of the bastards! Life is good.

The producers of the rather stunning Homeworld have made much of their 3D interface - reminding us all regularly that Digital Anvil's similar game, Conquest, was forced to use a



2D plane for their manoeuvring spaceships, rather than a full 3D sphere. Well, Homeworld may have the funky 3D interface, but Conquest loses little in gameplay by having their ships traverse a 2D plane only. In fact, this adds to the gameplay, in that selecting and ordering units is as intuitive as any other RTS, but with all-

new 3D graphics to make it look a treat.

When we saw this game in beta, there were still a few critical gameplay elements yet to be decided upon, but first impressions were high. Playing the game, we immediately thought of



Dark Reign, in that the style seems to favour a large variety of units with highly specialised - and often pleasingly original, functions. What's new and truly different is that everything revolves around the large capital ships. These behemoths tour the universe, carrying within many light fighters of varying description. The Capital ships themselves pack a mighty punch, with their broadside battles deliberately reminiscent of heavy duty WW2 battleship duels.

Planets and bases are your centres of resource management

A 2D/3D hybrid that looks great without losing functionality

and scientific research. What we saw looked a little light in these important departments - sci-fi games like this especially should have a complex tree of research, but the developers wanted a game where the action kicked in sooner rather than later.

While less revolutionary than the genre-breaking Homeworld, Conquest looks to be more instantly playable, without compromising on the things that make a RTS great.



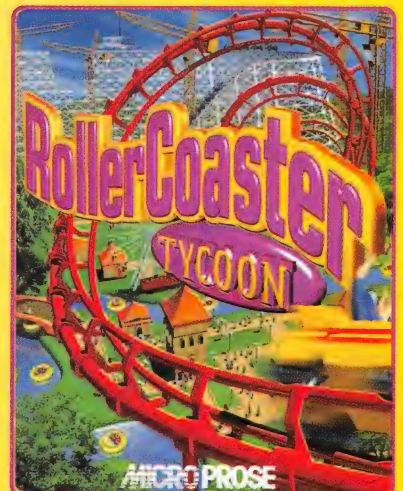
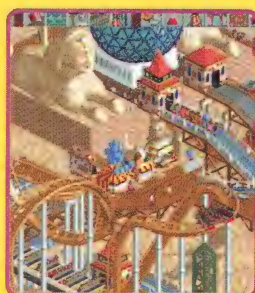
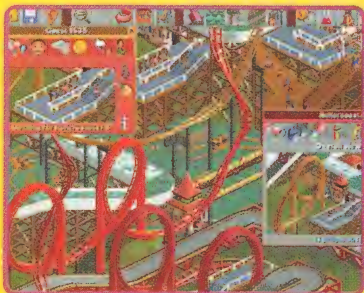
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MICRO PROSE

Heavy Gear 2

Category Mech Sim
Players 1-TBA (TCP/IP, IPX)
Publisher Activision
Available Soon, very soon

Activision and Dream Pod 9 have been toiling away on this one for a good long while now, and the production is at last reaching the final stages. The game uses the Dark Side

engine, the same as is used in Interstate '82 and it looks a treat as you can tell from the screen-shots. It's not just going to be eye candy on the surface though, the meat in the sandwich is always the gameplay - and if the analogy holds then HG2 is a nice thick juicy steak.



They aren't nearly as big as the Mechwarrior behemoths, but they're just as much fun



To begin with, characterisation will play a large role in the proceedings. Each Gear needs a pilot, and as commander of your troops you'll be hand picking the best men and women for the job. Your troops will have a substantial array of data attached to them, detailing their areas of strength and weaknesses and personality types. There will only be a limited number of co-pilots available to you, and once you let them get killed, that's it - you'll be on your own.

The reason is that you're in command of your troops behind enemy lines, with a range of missions including making surprise attacks, taking tactical areas, and so on. To aid you in your tasks, you will be able to access a top-down strategic

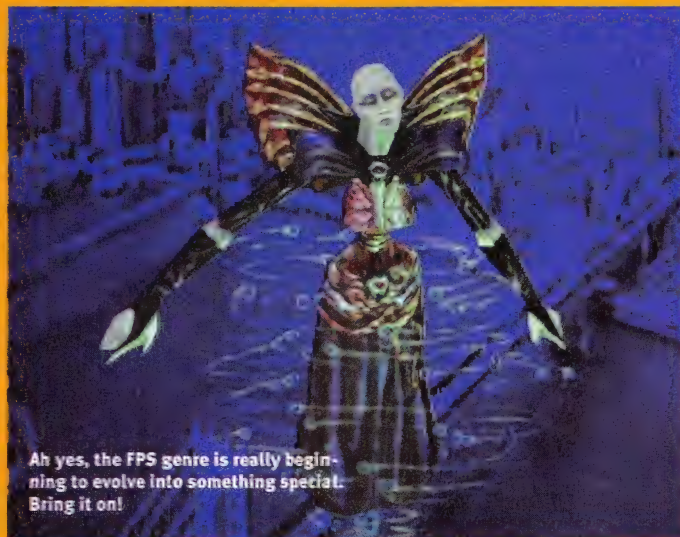
map, from which you'll be able to issue orders to a fairly high degree of detail, setting waypoints, formations, defending areas, and more. Also, there will be over 60 Gears to choose from, each with differing abilities - some are suited to sniping, others are large weapons carriers, some are suited to deserts, and so on. You'll need to choose the best Gears for each mission, as there will be various terrains, and various objectives too. The selection and outfitting of your Gears will be crucial to your success.

Everything about this looks great - the AI is strong, the multiplayer options plentiful, and there'll be a huge range of weaponry to choose from to boot. We can't wait!

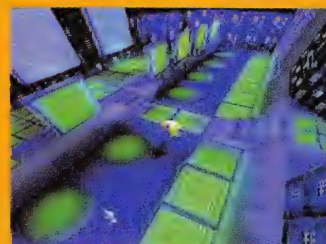
Sanity

Category Third person
 Psionic Shooter
Players 1-TBA
Publisher Monolith
Available 3rd Qtr 99

Monolith are emerging as one of the new crew of first/third person shooter developers with both talent and the will to succeed. Blood, built on the 'Build' engine was a bit of fun, but the success of Shogo:



Ah yes, the FPS genre is really beginning to evolve into something special. Bring it on!



One of the most interesting features of Sanity is the combat system. This will apparently combine "the mechanics of card based games, such as Magic: The Gathering with a fast isometric 3rd person shooter". Wow! Sanity will also feature 12 different fighting styles, where the psionic powers are developed over the course of the game, depending on which decisions the player takes. The strategic decisions over which power to use on which enemy will form a large part of the gameplay, and if it works could make for a very interesting game. Also, each time a talent is used, both health and sanity levels will be reduced - so players will have to make educated and strategic decisions about usage of their powers. For an interesting and potentially awesome new take on the genre, Sanity deserves a close eye to be kept upon it. More soon.

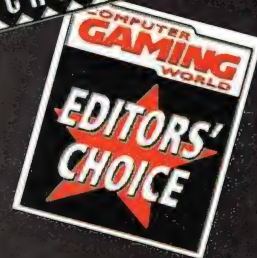
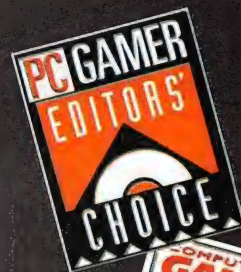
MAD (and to a smaller extent, Blood 2) has firmly placed them on the map.

Sanity boasts an interesting and dark storyline as well as some very pretty graphics, and a slightly different take on the whole 'shooter'

genre. The story is set in the near-future, at a time when the human race has developed psionic powers - though at a price. Those 'blessed' with psionic talents can't cope with the overload of their brains and quickly succumb to insane destructive urges. The Government, in this post X-Files world, quickly develops a secret operation where they cultivate psionics from birth, training them to combat these awesomely powerful and destructively insane people. And surprise surprise, there's a governmental conspiracy to uncover too.



Hercules



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Formula 1 Racing

Category Racing Sim
Players 1-12
Publisher Eidos/Ozisoft
Available 3rd Qtr '99

What can only be described as a surprising move, Eidos Interactive have chosen to release an official Formula 1 racing title instead of the "She'll Be Right, Mate" driving simulation. So unfortunately, you won't be

able to hoon around parking lots in a Datsun Sunny, with Men At Work cranked up to eleven and a bucket of soggy chips helping provide the engine's necessary lubrication. Think about how popular this game would have been! The possibilities endless...

So instead, you get the razzle and roar of Formula 1 racing. There have been a fair few cracks at this style of racing, however

most highly regarded racing games of late have been based on other racing disciplines (with the exception of the amazing Grand Prix Legends, which

returns to the golden age of racing anyway). The time is nigh for a breathtaking Formula 1 sim.

Eidos have managed to secure the official FOA license, and have modelled the game on the FIA World Championships. Other than meaning that the 16 official course that you race on will look pretty spectacular (Eidos claim that they've been modelled on the real thing to the last detail), you'll also get all the official stats and trivia.

The racing model brings back subtle view manipulation to the world of racing sims. So when you accelerate, the viewpoint gently glides a few degrees up, and when you brake, the viewpoint moves down a tad. A fantastic touch that simulates real-world physics. The questionable addi-

tion though, is the automatic turning of the viewpoint into a turn (much like a set padlock view featured in recent flight sims). Thankfully, you'll be able to turn this off in the final version. This game also features perhaps the most comprehensive set of camera angles and viewpoints ever seen in a racing game.

Formula 1 Racing will support up to 12 players over a network. Expect a full review soon.



Starlancer

Category Space Combat sim
Players 1
Publisher Microsoft/
 Digital Anvil
Available 3rd Qtr 99

The first urge one gets when sitting down to do a preview of a game like Starlancer is to say "it's like Wing Commander" in a variety of ways, over 2-3 paragraphs. Well that'd be just plain lazy, wouldn't

it? We will indulge ourselves, for Starlancer is so very much like Wing Commander in every spooky little way.

Take Erin Roberts - someone, please. Microsoft did. Erin worked with big brother Chris on most of the Wing Commander games. Eventually he broke away and produced the reasonably well loved Privateer and Privateer II: The Darkening.

Give a lad like Eric the invite



make a new game, and what do Microsoft get? StarWing CommanderLancer, of course. From a press kit we quote: "Starlancer combines the action of first-person space combat with the drama and intrigue of a classic air combat movie." Ho ho ho. That's pure Wing Commander, that is.

Of course, we are not dismally moaning that Starlancer is another Wing Commander clone, no, with fists raised to the heavens we thank Erin and friends dearly for making Starlancer another Wing Commander clone.

It's been a while...

Meow. No Kilrathi in this game. Instead the great nations of earth have created strategic alliances, you're a hot rookie pilot and, ah, you then proceed to rip around the place in a spacefighter, blasting stuff. Cut scene cinematics come from the production team that made the Wing Commander movie, by the way, which gives it all a very... Wing Commander look.

There! A mere handful of passing mentions of the WC thing. Which this is not, this is Starlancer, ok?

WORMS ARMAGEDDON

ARMAGEDDON - The last battle between GOOD and EVIL on the Day of Judgement.

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CD-ROM

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MICROPROSE

www.microprose.com



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Category Mech sim
Players 1-8
Publisher Microprose
Available 3rd Qtr 99

The Battletech universe has spawned some very interesting and enjoyable games. Mechwarrior 2 was undoubtedly a brilliant game in all areas, you could go anywhere and blow anything up. Netmech worked, not spectacularly, but it did the trick. It also had a decent (if simple) plot: clans fighting for world domination in big hunks of metal...it doesn't sound like



much, but anyone who played Mech 2 and liked it will know that it fitted the game well.

Mechwarrior 3 takes place in the year 3058, a time when all members of the Inner Sphere have decided to unite and destroy the clans (the same ones

Mechwarrior 3

that were in Mech 2) and make sure they completely annihilate a particularly deadly one, the "Smoke Jaguars."

Mech 3 has been under development in the MicroProse studios for a while, and a lot of this time has gone into developing a new standard of graphics.

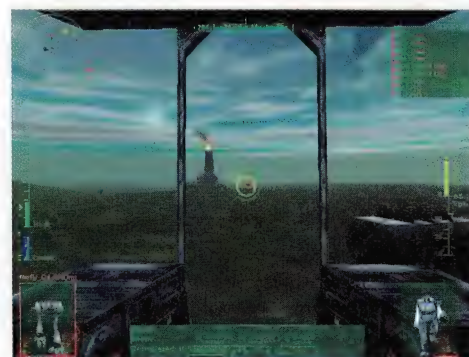
Transparent water, storm clouds rolling across the sky, waves at the beach, shadows following you perfectly on every angle, small puffs of dust kicking off the ground as you stomp it flatter then it already is. The Mechs are detailed too, covered in blackened areas and looking surprisingly plausible. When you blast an arm off one, you can even see cables that have been ripped off and are now hanging out, and the explosions are near perfect, smoke and all. This is good stuff.

The environment is open to just about any form of interac-

tion you can think of: you can destroy it if you can see it, but now you can stomp it flat, mark your territory by blasting a crater in the middle of nowhere or take your mech to the beach for a swim. Every once in a while you'll find a little man or two running around...enjoy!

Mechs are now classified 'dead' when you blow their leg off - they fall over, no explosion or fire, but they are dead. Everything can be damaged, including the ground. All of this pleases us greatly. Stay tuned for this next exciting instalment.

Finn Ghent



Full Auto

Category Driving
Players 1-8
Publisher Microsoft
Available 3rd Qtr 99

What we have here is an extreme car combat and racing game set in some dark post-apocalyptic future where a man and his car can turn the tides of evil and save humanity from some evil scourge. Or something.

That be damned, what we actually have - once the fat's boiled off and we take a good look at the meat, is indeed car combat and racing, but designed almost purely for multiplayer; specifically, internet play.

Full Auto debuted at last year's E3 as "Inertia". Back then the focus was the unique ability



to almost completely custom-design your car from a multitude of parts, with the death-matching more a case of proving the better designer, rather than recognising the talents and heroics of the drivers. The deep and complex car design is still part of this game, but has now taken a backseat to the pure thrills that deathmatching alone is capable of delivering.

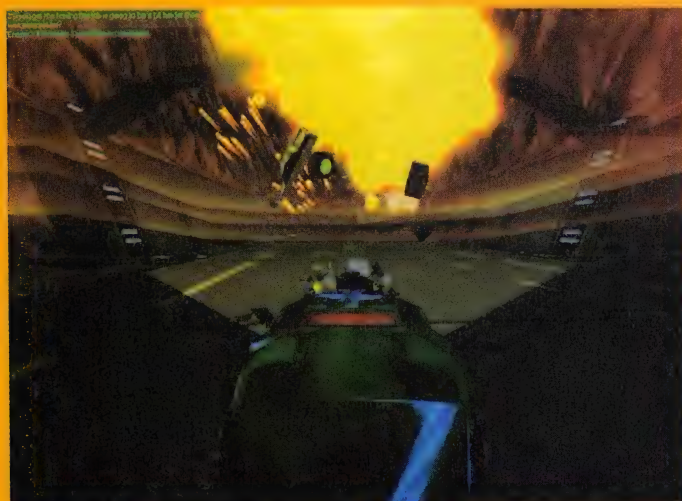
Funky track design, glittering pyrotechnics and inventive special devices spread through a track give Full Auto its special taste. Mighty jump ramps launch you into glowing, sparkly airborne stuff, which teleports you to the other side of a canyon, obstacle courses of walls-which-must-be-shot-at-the-last-second, weird robot NPCs



That's the apocalypse, that is

rip around the place disrupting your plans, etc. It's, like we said, extreme. Creating a pure death-match car game would be easy, and fun to play - but not for very long. To add to this game's longevity Microsoft have created some highly original track designs. They nicely combine racing with combat, plus tricks and special sections to keep it all busy. For the single player there are 27 scripted missions, although these weren't fully incorporated into the beta we played, so we can't comment on their quality yet.

For combat racers who take themselves more seriously than the 'instant-fix' Carmageddon crowd, this could be the sim you're living for.





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THE SCORE

NEW!! CONVENIENT FORMAT. THE A-Z OF GAMES AS WE SAW THEM

GAME			SCORE ISSUE		
101st Airborne	71	#33	Blade Runner	96	#19
3D Mini Golf	80	#14	Blood	71	#14
3D Ultra Mini Golf Deluxe	60	#30	Blood 2	72	#34
3D Ultra Pinball	77	#21	Blood and Magic	86	#9
3rd Reich	82	#12	Blood Plasma	55	#21
688th Central Postal Directory	90	#16	Blue Ice	77	#10
7th Legion	53	#19	Brainstorm	43	#9
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Acclaim's D	80	#1	Bud Tucker	70	#3
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Duke 3D Plutonium Pack	80	#16	Duke Nukem 3D	90	#28
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Elk Moon Murder	65	#5	Enemy Infestation	76	#30
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Extractors	30	#5	Extreme Assault	88	#17
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F-22 Lightning 2	80	#8	F-22 Raptor	74	#22
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F1 Manager	75	#8	F1 Racing Sim	79	#22
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F18: Aggressor	69	#32	F22 ADF	87	#21
F22 ADF	87	#21	F22 ADF: Rea Sea	85	#27
F22 ADF: Rea Sea	85	#27	FA/18 E Carrier Strike Fighter	68	#30
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Fatal Abyss	62	#33	Fate of Fire	53	#29
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FIFA 98	95	#20	FIFA 99	92	#32
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G-Police	92	#18	Galapagos	77	#19
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Gex 2: Enter the Gecko	87	#28	Global Domination	63	#32
Global Domination	63	#32	Golf Pro 2000	65	#10
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Great Battles of Hannibal	62	#23	Great Fandango	91	#31
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Heaven's Dawn	25	#6	Heavy Gear	91	#20
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Hedz	69	#32	Helicopters	79	#15
Helicopters	79	#15	Hell Bender	54	#7
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Heretic 2	91	#34	Heroes of Might and Magic 2	88	#10
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Home	90	#3	Home 2	91	#18
Home 2	91	#18	Hexen II: Portal of Praevus	78	#27
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Hoyle Casino '98	73	#22	Hunter Hunted	70	#10
Hunter Hunted	70	#10	Hyperblade	89	#8
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Independence Day	85	#13	Indy Racing	64	#28
Indy Racing	64	#28	Int. Rally Championship	79	#21
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Jetfighter: Full Burn	67	#32	Johann Herberich's Grand Prix	91	#30
Johann Herberich's Grand Prix	91	#30	Joint Strike Fighter	85	#20
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Jonah Lomu Rugby	45	#20	Journeyman Project 3	69	#22
Journeyman Project 3	69	#22	Judge Dredd Pinball	82	#30
Judge Dredd Pinball	82	#30	Karma	20	#2
Karma	20	#2	King's Quest 8	85	#34
King's Quest 8	85	#34	Kingdom of Magic	69	#4
Kingdom of Magic	69	#4	KKnD 2: Krossfire	65	#28
KKnD 2: Krossfire	65	#28	KKnD Extreme	70	#19
KKnD Extreme	70	#19	Klingon Honour Guard	84	#31
Klingon Honour Guard	84	#31	Knights and Merchants	81	#32
Knights and Merchants	81	#32	Krazy Ivan	57	#9
Krazy Ivan	57	#9	Krush Kill 'n Destroy	90	#7
Krush Kill 'n Destroy	90	#7	Lands Of Lore 2	92	#17
Lands Of Lore 2	92	#17	Last Bronx	70	#24
Last Bronx	70	#24	Legacy of Kain	65	#18
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Lords of Magic	74	#23	Lords of the Realms 2	84	#10
Lords of the Realms 2	84	#10	Luftwaffe Command	68	#35

LIST

Gold Award - Games scoring 90-95%

Platinum Award - Games scoring 95-100%

[illegible]

*TO HELL WITH THE PAST...
HERE'S THE FUTURE!*



Might and Magic VII

FOR BLOOD AND HONOR™



PC
CD
ROM



3DO™

NEW WORLD COMPUTING

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REVIEWS



Unexpectedly good month for games

Yikes, I've been here a mere two days and already Ben is asking me to introduce this month's batch of scintillating and insightful reviews. Hope I don't blow my throat, take a sip of water and breathe deeply. Okay, here goes...

Um, is this thing on...?

Sorry. Hello and welcome to the myriad wonders of the review section of the June issue of PC PowerPlay. Finally, we've managed to get our eager little hands (and rather enormous brains) on Activision's splendidly strategic Civilization: Call To Power. John loved it and I'm sure anyone else who likes stroking their chin will enjoy it equally.

Aliens vs Predator crept up on us all and gave Brett the fright of his life when it leapt down from the ceiling and turned out to be a fantastically cool first-

person shooter. Sadly, the rest of us had to clean up the bloody mess left behind.

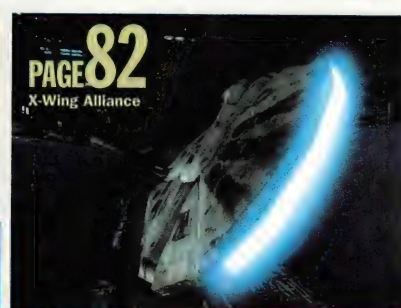
Other games I'd draw your attention to in this most unexpectedly good month include the difficult, but rewarding, Lander; X-Wing Alliance, which is what X-Wing vs TIE should have been; the creepy, B-movie schlock of Resident Evil 2; and, of course, TOCA 2 because it's even better than the first. Conversely, I'd suggest you divert your attention well clear of Asghan.

That's about it, I guess. Hope you have fun reading it 'n' all, and with any luck I'll see you next month. Thank you and goodnight.

Hey, Ben, how'd I go? (Yeah, tops David, where's me bloody Banana Daiquiri?! - Ben)

David Wildgoose

Civilization: Call To Power	66
Aliens vs. Predator	72
Starsiege	76
Lander	80
X-Wing Alliance	82
TOCA 2	84
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Asghan	90
Fighter Squadron	92
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Warbirds 2.....	96
Resident Evil 2	98
Imperialism 2.....	100
North vs. South	102
Gruntz	103



THE PC POWERPLAY SCORING SYSTEM

95%+	PLATINUM The Best. Virtually faultless, reserved for games which cause loss of sleep from thinking of nothing else.
90-94%	GOLD A classic. Either an unquestionable example of superiority within its genre, or a ground breaking game that'll be setting trends.
80-90%	A strong, eminently playable game. Hard to fault and likely to still be on the hard drive in 6 month's time.
60-80%	Competent and generally enjoyable. Flaws or mediocrity hold these games back from higher ratings.
40-60%	Average and ordinary. Not bad, not good. Ideal gift.
0-40%	Bad, really bad. Boring, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible.

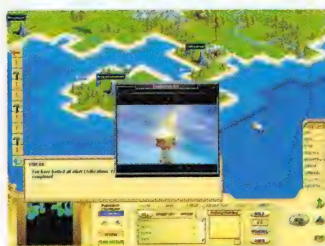
CIVILIZATION Call to Power

Finally, we get our hands on a copy of the final game - was it worth the agonising wait? Hell yeah! This is brilliant!

The Civilization series stands as a giant in the gaming world. Like the Ultima's and the Dooms, Civilization holds the honour of bringing a genre to the masses. Sure, there were strategy games before it but none had the kind of universal appeal that is the hallmark of truly fine gaming. Sid Meier made his name by developing Civ I & II amongst others. Now by intrigue and fate, we see the legacy of Civ expand from its origins at Microprose. There are at least two other developers with Civilization-esque games out at the moment and expect more to come as this is a growth industry, baby! Call To Power is Activision's offering and bears the Civilization title. So does this instalment continue the Civ family traditions? Damn straight it does. The joy and challenge of Civilization returns in Call To Power with some welcome improvements.

More power!

Civilization should need no introduction but for the uninitiated the story goes like this. You must found and nurture an empire. The aim is to expand by building more and more cities to become the most powerful leader on the planet. Along the way, you discover great knowledge and build great Wonders. The game inevitably involves diplomacy and probably butting heads with other would-be tyrants. The



Interface hell. Civ:CTP spreads it all out - no all-in-one city status screen. Tut tut tut.

end result? Global domination!!! Ha ha ha ha... There is the softies' option for victory of course. In Civ II it was establishing a colony in outer space, which caused the problem of CTP's rival, Alpha Centauri. Your pacifistic goal for victory this time around is to breed an alien - just to avoid any similar sequel problems in the future (aliens, hmm... Civilization: Call to Mulder? Nah, that's silly).



Seasoned veterans might think that very little has changed in the Civ universe. On the surface, this appears true. The basic premises of Civilization remain. You research technology that

brings power and advancement to your people. You manage resources in your empire, producing units, improvements or Wonders to advance your cause. The game operates in turns. Much is the same but Call To Power has some subtle and important changes.

Public works?

One of the biggest changes is the new way that infrastructure is built. No longer do you rely on your settler or engineer to wander around making mines and roads. Instead we have the new concept of public works. In Call To Power you allocate a percentage of resources to a public works fund and construct your required amenities accordingly. So at any time you have enough credit in your public works fund,





Default leader names for the 'Australian' race are Gough Whitlam and Carmen Lawrence. Funny, yes

you can build a road, mine, farm or fishing nets for one of your citizens to work on. Allocating too much funding to public works results in inefficiency. In *Call To Power*, you are required to deal with realistic situations that an emperor or prime minister would have to.

Conquer or annex?

In fact, the management of resources is the absolute focus of *Civilization*. Do you build a

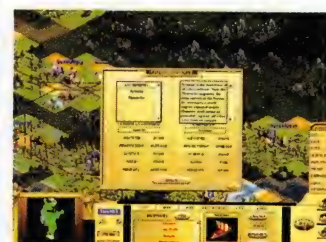
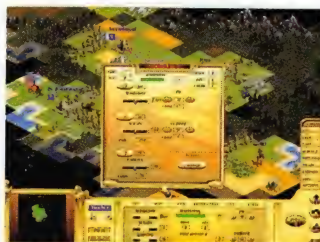
granary or another legion? Do you start that Wonder or make more settlers?

You now have a more direct control over the direction of your efforts with the ability to set priorities. Called Maxing, this is a way to automatically alter your production for greater growth, more production or more wealth. It's a great idea but experienced *Civers* will be touching up the finer details themselves. This is the great thing about *Call To Power*, it offers the first timers the means to rule as well as having the depth for when you become a little more experienced.

God saves!

The concepts that the game presents can be a little strange but are ultimately unsettlingly authentic. Early in the game there are slave traders and missionaries. But even stranger are the offensive units later on: corporate branch, televangelist and

lawyer! They say the battle-grounds of the present and future are the stock exchanges and courts. A good way into *Call To Power*, you can command your lawyers as you once commanded your legions. The developers have chosen to be as realistic as possible and offer such



Bizarro Units

We showed you some gems in last month's preview, like the televangelist and the corporate branch. Here are some other juicy new units from Call To Power.



1 Samurai: A nice option for an early offensive unit. This one is great in conjunction with some mounted units and has the best outfit. A bonus is the "For the shogun!" catchphrase.

2 Plasmatica: The future of footsoldiers. This is a female warrior and she has plasma cannons surgically attached to her arms! Defend Neo Tokyo with a couple of these babies.

3 Infector: Talk about insidious, this is a stealth unit used to infect another city with some dangerous contagion. The aim is to confuse the enemy but not to kill. Which makes it alright then...

4 Subneural Advertising: You have to love this one. A weapon of the future: send subliminal advertising to your enemies for a product that doesn't exist! How kooky! Unhappiness will be rampant. Just pray they don't send it to your people!

5 Wormhole Probe: A futuristic space vehicle that travels through mysterious wormholes to other dimensions. They are used to search for alien DNA to cultivate. Bad idea guys - didn't any of you see Alien???

barbarisms as slavery as a genuine economic option. As usual in these games, ideology is totally left up to the player - be a Mussolini for all I care!

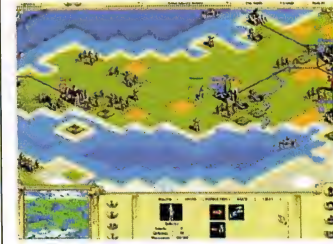
Feedback

Each unit has its own movement animation and customised response. From your mounted archer, you'll hear, "Find the enemy!" and "The horses must rest!". From your samurai, you'll hear "For the shogun". It's great fun and it adds to the longevity of the piece, as each new unit has

something new to say. So if you find the regular units entertaining, just wait until you see the ecoterrorist and the cyber ninja!

Realistic war

Perhaps the best innovation that has been made in Call To Power is the concept of battle. A complaint levelled at Civ II was that its combat lacked depth and even logic. This is certainly not the case in CTP. Here you can establish battalions or armies of units that fight co-operatively. When you begin a battle in this



The game we love, but aren't too pleased with the fiddly isometric viewpoint



way, a combat window comes up showing the units on each side. All units are arranged as they would be in a real army: a front-line of foot soldiers with the artillery or mounted units behind. The units then take turns biffing each other until your men pummel the evil blighters or are beaten like the cowards they are! The terrain is shown and apparently affects battle. This is one improvement of Civilization that has raised the game overall. It's a truly great combat system that is heads and shoulders above anything we've seen previously (and are still seeing).

Sounds good

One thing that always does it for me in a game is the soundtrack. Call To Power offers a fantastic aural experience from the voices of individual units to the vast range of sounds in background music. Offering a polite nod to the past, there are the obligatory tribal drums but the sounds vary widely. You can find moody atmospheric soundscapes and lighter, sweet melodies. My favourite is the



West African-ish guitar sing-along that you might easily hear on a world music CD. The best thing about the music is that it seemed to follow the action. While I waged bloody siege to the walls of Botany Bay (no joking!), the music became distinctly unnerving. Maybe this is

subliminal anti-war messaging on Activision's part. The sounds in the game are another reason that Call To Power is a top notch game.

Click, click - oops!

The big sore spot with the game is in the basic interface.



Naval combat is more balanced than Civs of old

And in the Red corner...

Alpha Centauri vs. Call To Power

These two titles are the strategy games of the moment, clear rivals for the Civ gamer's attention. Alpha Centauri has the pedigree over Call To Power, due to Sid Meier developing it. Both bear a striking resemblance to Civilization II - the first in a futuristic setting, the second over an expanded time scale. So which is the game for you?

Alpha Centauri

Happiness: Extremely close to Civ II and maintains the simple interface. The game has a more ecological side, due to the greater involvement with your environs - Planet. There is great versatility with the customisation of units.

Sadness: Due to being somewhere in the future, all your technologies and base improvements have strange names and this can make the game inaccessible at first. Combat is the same old unit vs. unit affair. Fairly drab visuals. Too much philosophical psychobabble.

Call To Power:

Happiness: Rather different to Civ II, with some new concepts like public works. Design is clear and pleasing to the eye. Combat is far superior to Alpha Centauri and Civ II. The technological advancements are easy to understand.

Sadness: Is confusing and can be VERY annoying! Probably the only flaw, but it's a biggy.

Call To Power probably beats Alpha Centauri at the line purely because it is much more accessible to gamers new and old. However Alpha Centauri has it over its rival in gaming interface. So a few months down the line Call To Power might seem pretty tiresome. They are both excellent games and deserve your attention. Let's hope that future titles can pinch the best ideas from both games...



There are some clever ideas here that have just not been executed well. As in all turn based games, you cycle through your available units until their turns have been exhausted. In Call To Power, there is the additional option of setting a course for your units - at any time throughout your turn. This means that a particular unit's turn is never over until you deselect it. Imagine it, selecting and deselecting every single unit in your empire! If you happen to forget to deselect a unit and try to select another, you have effectively sent the previous unit to the new unit's location. This can be positively disastrous at times and in this reviewer's opinion shows an example of stupidity in the face of brilliance elsewhere in Call To Power. Let's hope some ironing out occurs in the form of subsequent patches.

It's brilliant

Call To Power is a fantastic game and offers those with a strategic leaning everything that they'll need. The game starts in the wee dark ages and ends around 3000A.D., so there is ample opportunity to be impressed by fancy spacecraft and futuristic weaponry that the designers have imagined. Most impressive of all is the concept work behind the game. There is the clever analysis of past and present economics as well as some serious, logical and not-unlikely technologies in Call To Power. You will be impressed by these aspects as much as the cut and thrust of the game. Apart from the unfortunate interface problems, Call To Power is the complete strategic game and offers the kind of replay value we tend to pray for. Extraordinary gaming.

John Dewhurst

PLUS+



PLATINUM

96%

Category Turn-based strategy

Players 1 - 8 (LAN, TCP/IP)

Publisher Activision

Price TBA

Rating G

Available Now

For An evolved Civilization with more units, more concepts, better battle, great music and replay value.

Against Interface is not as user-friendly as in Civ II - why make something worse??

Need Win 95/98, P133, 32Mb RAM, 4xCD

Want P233, 4Mb sound card

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April Issue

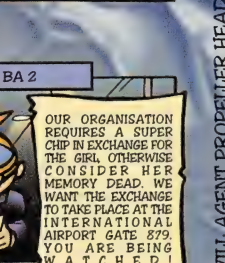
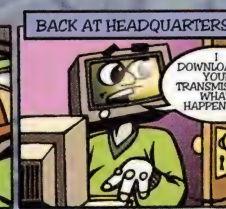


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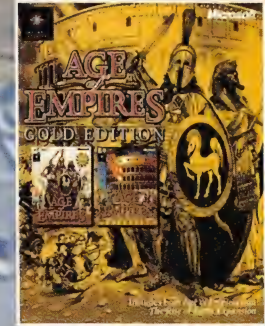


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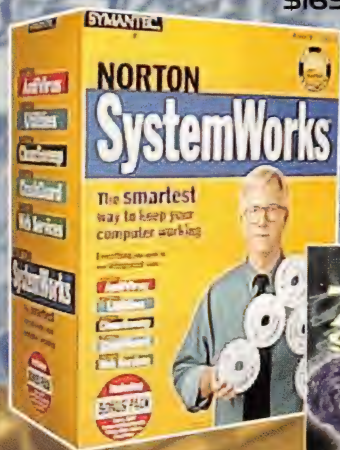
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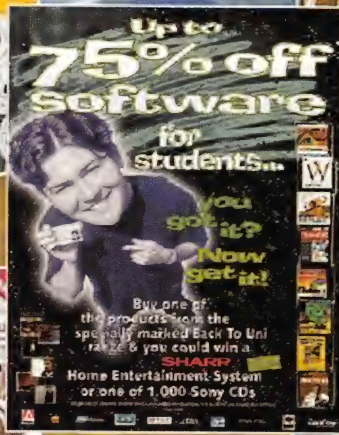




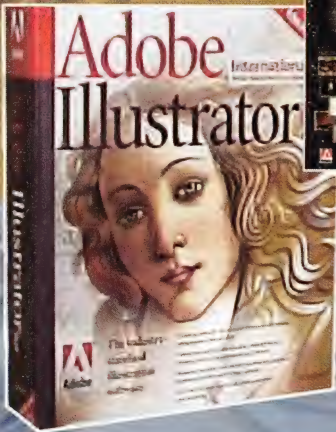
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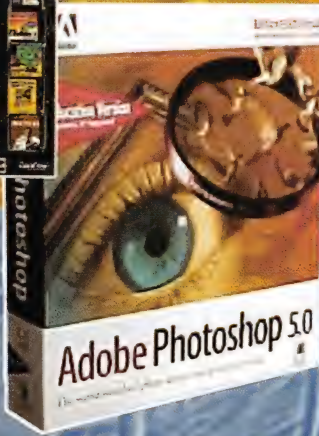
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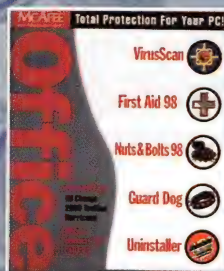
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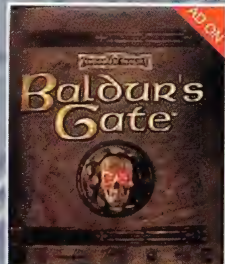
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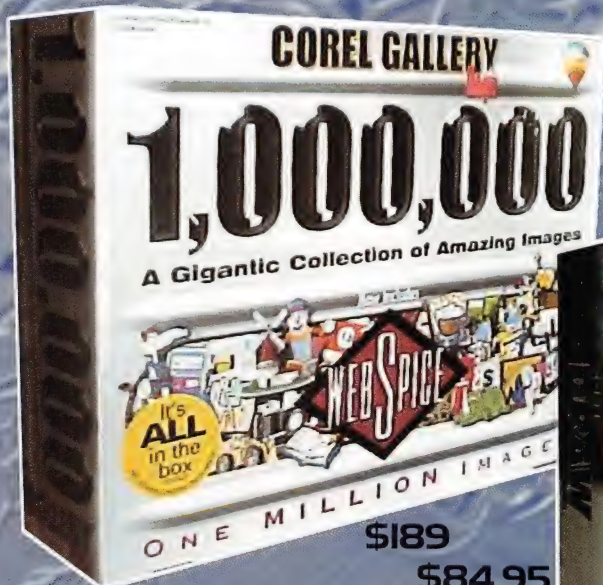
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ALIENS vs. PREDATOR

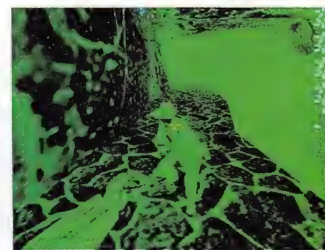
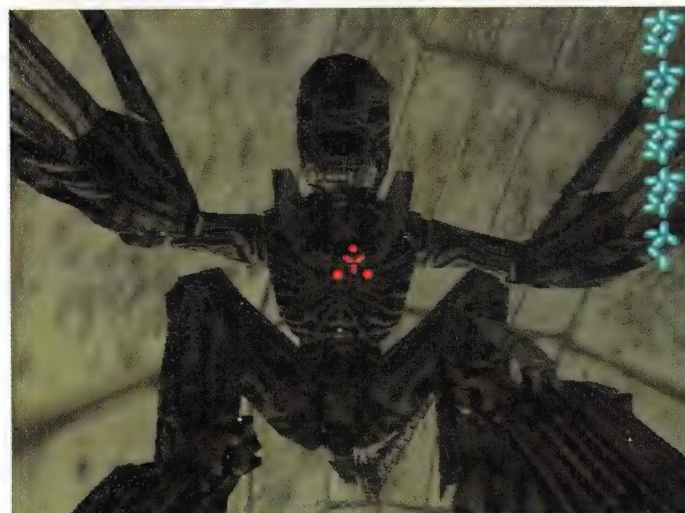
Three species to play as, each requiring a different approach, great multi-play, and fantastic visuals make this a strong contender for game of the year

After years of botched attempts and numerous coverups, Weyland Yutani ("The Company") 'acquires' several Xenomorph specimens. The specimens are immediately transferred to a hidden research base on a remote planet occupied only by terraformers. As is always the case when dangerous organisms are the subject of covert experiments, someone absent minded leaves the cage door unlocked. The Aliens spring forth and liberate their incarcerated brethren, massacring or cocooning all but a few of the base's occupants. With its internal security force decimated and the Alien population increasing exponentially, The Company enlists the aid of the Colonial Space Marines. The

epic battle that ensues does not go unnoticed. Predators, drawn by the conflict and the prospect of a hunt, touch down on the planet. The stakes are high. Each species remains defiant; refusing to succumb, unwilling to die. With the battle lines drawn, a bloodbath is inevitable.

Stop your grinnin'

The player assumes the role of either a Colonial Marine, an Alien drone or a Predator. Each species has its own unique capabilities and vulnerabilities. Awareness of these strengths and weaknesses enables the player to exploit them to great effect. The Marine is clearly the most physically vulnerable of the three. Countering this is the fact that he is armed to the teeth with state of the art weaponry. Pulse



We'll take the Marine thanks. Big guns always win out

Rifles, Smart Guns and Flame Throwers are the mainstay of the Marine's sizeable arsenal. Grenade Launchers, SADAR rockets, Miniguns and a variety of electronic tracking and vision enhancement devices round out the Marine's combat loadout.

Where's Arnie?

At the opposite end of the physical spectrum is the Predator whose brute strength gives it a distinct long term survival advantage. The Predator is literally a mobile armoury; equipped with a razor sharp Wrist Blade, a Spear Gun, an Energy Pistol, and the dreaded Disc and Plasma Caster seen in the Predator movies. The Predator utilises an integrated helmet system which locks the Disc and the Plasma Caster onto targets. The helmet also provides the Predator with four vision modes; three of which display the Infra Red, Electromagnetic and Ultra Violet spectrums. Using these in combination with the Cloaking Device that confers near total invisibility, the Predator is a force to be reck-

oned with. In the hands of an experienced player, it becomes a veritable Angel of Death. Working to the Predator's disadvantage is its dependence on energy. With the exception of the Spear Gun and the Wrist Blade, all of the Predator's weapons consume energy. Whilst the energy slowly regenerates over time, injudicious use of energy-intensive weapons can leave a Predator extremely vulnerable.

Wall climbing

Last but certainly not least is the Alien, which employs a lethal combination of lightning speed, sickle-like claws and a powerful tail equipped with a poison-filled barb. The Alien is also able to bite the heads off humans in order to regenerate health, and has the unique ability to effortlessly climb walls. This ability to move in three dimensions gives the Alien enormous manoeuvrability and surprise attack advantages. The Alien's acid blood also



serves as an effective weapon when it is injured, and acts as a deterrent to foes attempting to despatch it in melee combat. The Alien's astounding offensive capabilities are balanced by its susceptibility to sustained attack; particularly from Flame Throwers, explosive and energy weapons.

Simply fantastic

Visually, AvP can only be described as phenomenal. The enormous environments are absolutely packed with detail. Personal items scattered about rooms, flashing lights, electronic equipment and acid burns extending several stories above and below all contribute to an unbelievable sense of "being there". The environments themselves include an Orbital Space Station and an eerie Alien Temple complete with hieroglyphs on the walls! Several levels will also be familiar to those



who have seen the Alien movies. LV426, and Fury161 feature prominently, as does the Derelict Spacecraft from Alien. Character models are the most intricately detailed of any game. Humans display a wide variety of facial expressions ranging from abject terror, to gutsy determination, to psychotic fury!

Eerie audio

While stunning visuals significantly enhance the game's appeal, it is the quality of AvP's audio that makes playing the game such an unforgettable experience. Every conceivable sound effect from the Alien and Predator movies has been included. These range from mundane things like the sound of automatic doors opening, to the piercing scream of an Alien spasmodically thrashing about in its death throes. The staccato tapping of a Face Hugger's feet as it scuttles out from a darkened corner will



If you'd seen Ben re-enacting Hudson's killing frenzy from Aliens, you'd know how much we like this game

and invisible Predators ominously click their mandibles.

Friendly fire

AvP's character AI is exemplary. All three species investigate suspicious sounds and will come to the aid of a comrade in need. When using the Alien to hang from the ceiling directly above an oblivious Marine, hissing causes him to immediately look up and attack. AI Marines and civilians also seem to possess their own unique personalities. Some Marines, when attacked front-on, grit their teeth and blast away at an assailant. Others may scream

send shivers up even the most hardened gamer's spine. Weapons sound effects are equally impressive - who could forget the sound of the Predator's Plasma Caster locking onto a hapless soldier, or the adrenaline inducing sound of a Smart Gun in action?! Speech within the game also deserves a mention. Aliens hiss threateningly, Marines yell in a peculiar combination of bravado and fear,



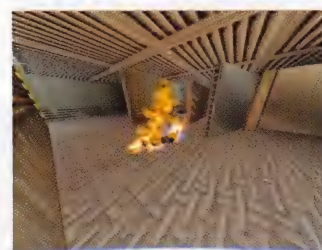
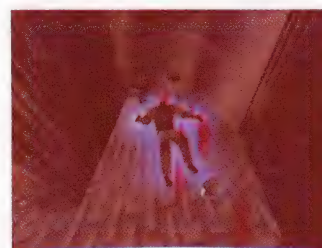


and flee in terror, call for backup, or panic and wildly fire their weapon in all directions. This last reaction often results in "friendly fire" incidents; particularly amusing when the panicky person is equipped with a Flame Thrower! If the player manages to knock a Marine's weapon out of his hands, he will immediately whip a pistol out of its holster and begin firing ineffectually in a futile effort to save his own life. Similarly, causing damage to a Marine's weapon will see him frantically attempting to fire it; often to no avail.

Tag the alien

Multiplayer offers up to eight combatants the opportunity to compete in several different modes. In all, there are seven multiplayer maps, two of which are for Cooperative play. The other five are for use in Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch,

Species Deathmatch, Predator Tag and Alien Tag games. Predator Tag requires some elaboration. One player is a Predator, while the others are Marines or Aliens. The Marines and Aliens must attempt to kill the Predator as quickly as possible, with a minimum of casualties. When the Predator is killed, the player that killed him becomes the Predator, and the former Predator reverts to a Marine or Alien.



Hmm, on second thoughts, maybe the Alien would be a better pick. Nice Alien, ni... aarrrrgghh!

Beefy system

The only drawback to AvP is its inherently steep system requirements. While a P200 is the minimum system needed to play the game, a PII300 or greater is needed in order to get the most enjoyment. A PII400 would offer the player the opportunity to play in 1024x768 resolution at 30+ frames per second, but this isn't really necessary.

Free underwear?

Overall, AvP is undeniably one of the most immersive FPS's ever. It contains a multitude of golden gaming moments that will be indelibly imprinted on the player's mind. Those who were disappointed by the demos should reconsider, as the demos did not do this game justice. Aliens vs Predator is a shining example of how movie licences can be put to good use, and is unquestionably a contender for the 1999 Game of the Year.

Brett Robinson

PLATINUM

96%

Category First Person Shooter
Players 1-8
Publisher Fox Interactive
Price \$89.95
Rating M15+
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For Spectacular visuals, phenomenal audio, astounding AI, incredible multiplayer and virtually limitless long term appeal.

Against Quite steep system requirements.

Need P200, 32MB RAM, 3D accelerator

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STARSIEGE

The big guns, Mechwarrior 3 and Heavy Gear 2, are still on the horizon - but Starseige is stealing the show. Why wait?

You could probably be forgiven for thinking that Starseige and Tribes are the same game. On the surface they appear to be almost identical, so much so that there'd probably be a massive law suit regarding copyright if they weren't both made by the same people. Initially, you might think the only difference is that it's mech combat instead of on foot. Just bigger people right? Wrong.

Wide open spaces

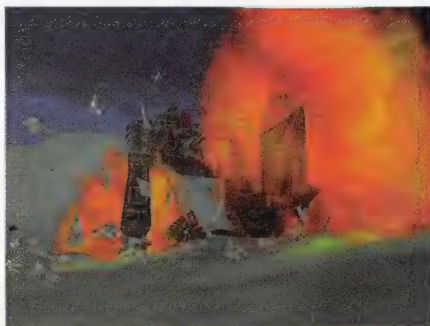
Graphically, the Tribes and Starseige engines are virtually indistinguishable. While it lacks in detail compared to the mostly indoor engines, its outdoor appeal is something which is unsurpassed. Because of the outdoor nature of the combat it encourages things which are very different to your normal corridor wars. In some ways it plays more like a flight sim than a First Person Shooter and the openness of the terrain is one reason for this, there are others which we'll go into a little later. The animations are something to behold. When you're running along you can look down and actually see your legs pumping away, you can blow arms and head off other HERCs and it all looks great. Although it may be easier to model mechanical movement than a human, Dynamix have still done a stellar job and it really adds a lot to the game.



"Hey buddy, got a light?"

Single and multi

Of course, unlike Tribes which has no single player game to speak of, Starseige has two massive single player campaigns to wander through. Upon starting the first campaign you can really tell that a lot of the work has gone into their production. You would expect that with a game which is obviously going to have a large multiplayer following, would skimp on single player by just having a few training type missions and that's it. Fortunately for all of us, the campaigns are great, and really give the player a work out.



finding lost allies and fishing out spies. Along with the storyline and the variety of ships you can pilot it all makes for an intriguing journey. Did we mention variety? I think we did.

Build your own

Theoretically, there are thousands of different vehicles you can possess. There are two main types though, big walking HERCs and tanks. To each of these styles you can add any number of weapons, special addons, reactors, engines, shields and the list goes on. It's up to you to build the perfect fighting machine. One of the best undocumented tactics to use with the tanks is to just run into



Saving Private Cybrid

Each of the two campaigns (Humans or Cybrids) is full of many and varied missions which is definitely good for the boredom factor. Right from the start you'll be taking out drop-ships and convoys,



Mech 5 uses his laser pointer to blind yet another passing taxi driver



other people. You'll be sure to find those two metal twigs they call legs will fall under the might of your bull bar. Of course if you do manage to blow their arms off they'll have to come in for some ramming action anyway, so let the games begin.

Putting Intelligence back into AI

Artificial Intelligence is probably the most important part of a single player experience, and Dynamix should get a big tick against their record because Starseige AI is some of the best

ever. The enemy definitely seems intelligent, and will always try to get around your back where you can't see it. They'll gang up on people and fight in groups rather than just stand alone waiting to be picked off. Another important facet of the AI is the rest of your squadron. Your underlings are pretty good at what they do, you can order them about or you can simply leave them to their own devices. Either way works great and even though they will follow you around they aren't right up

your tail pipe (so to speak) all the time and give you some freedom without running into them. They even whistle when they're bored.

Immelmanns?

Maybe the biggest mistake you can make playing this game is playing like a first person shooter. Sure the principles are the same but the HERCs handle more like aeroplanes than people, which is definitely something to be aware of. The first thing you'll notice about controlling these behemoths

is that try as you might, you can't strafe. This changes battles immediately to a much more flowing movement oriented nature, you'll be doing a lot of circling and honestly a few flight sim dogfight tactics work really well.

Drive by HERCing

The control system does take quite some time to get used to, you use directional keys to move around and the mouse to aim within your view. Starseige differs from a lot of these types of games in that it doesn't get too technical. Personally this is probably a good thing since it's a lot more accessible than a lot of Mech games to date. There are only about ten or so default keys - sweet. When you start playing you'll think that your HERC is skating on ice, mainly because

Tanks or HERCs, HERCs or Tanks.

So which do you choose? They both have their advantages. Tanks are great because of their durability, and the ability to swivel the entire cockpit 360 degrees. They lose out though in manoeuvrability and speed. HERCs on the other hand are much faster, but only have a limited swivel area. Once you choose one type you aren't stuck with it, mess around with your vehicle in the early rounds to see what works for you and what doesn't.



Being able to 'drag & drop' elements of the HUD is one seriously nice touch

once you get it up to speed it stays there even if you take your finger off the key. You actually have to use reverse thrust to slow down which might seem annoying but can prove very useful for that "drive by shooting" you always wanted to commit.

Left brain/right brain

The crosshair is partially independent from the moving direction in the HERCs and entirely independent in the tanks which makes an interesting variation from the norm. It really forces you to play differently and use different tactics. It's disorienting at first, and you'll often find yourself going the wrong way, especially in battles. The system does have its advan-

tages though, the major one being accuracy. It's never been easier to keep firing at a moving target while moving in a straight line.

Serving up multiplayer

For multiplayer, Dynamix have really taken a leaf out of the FPS book and given us options like Capture the Flag and King of the Hill, not to mention ordinary deathmatch and teamplay. This would probably be a first for this style and multiplayer is already available on WON.net and Sierra's servers, offering a variety of game types online. There's nothing worse than having a game multiplayer ready, but no servers to play on. Luckily Sierra realise this and by the time you read this there

should be servers worldwide, hopefully quite a few in Australia.

Buddying up

Playing Starseige online is definitely strange, people who have finished the single player game will be at a definite advan-

Starseige versus Tribes

It makes no sense to compare the two games really, since they both play so differently. But we couldn't help but ask why they couldn't have made one game instead of two. Tribes already has aircraft so why not add a few HERC's and Tanks to spice things up a bit? Makes perfect sense to us, we call it Starseige Shogo. How about it Dynamix?

tage over those who haven't and for the first couple of months, most deathmatches will be pretty tardy affairs, especially with strict FPS players giving it a go. Starseige is best played on a LAN and thankfully Sierra has included a "Buddy Install" for that very purpose. It doesn't require the CD, and only plays multiplayer which is great for LAN parties.

Not Tribes

Starseige is the finest game available in its genre at the moment. There will be heavy opposition from Battletech and Heavy Gear 2 but they can't detract from this games greatness. It may look like Tribes, but once you start playing you realise it's a whole different ballgame. Hats off to Dynamix for giving Starseige the time and effort it deserved and not just making "Tribes with Bigger People." From the outset you can see Starseige is a classy product and if you're into the whole Starseige universe thing you'll probably be camping outside your local game shop waiting to get your hands on it.

One for all

For the rest of us though Starseige makes either a pleasant change or the latest in an increasingly long list of "Mech" games. It'll probably take some time to get used to but you'll be glad you did, as mech combat has never been so smooth and fluid, even on lower end systems. If you're into this style of games you'll get a lot of use out of Starseige. If you have been playing First Person Shooters a lot you should also give it a look, its action aspect will more than likely win you over. Now, where did I put that Emancipator...

Rod "Spoonman" Campbell



PLUS⁺



www.starseigeplayers.com

GOLD

90%

Category Mech Combat
Players 1 - 32 (TCP/IP, IPX)
Publisher Sierra
Price \$89.95
Rating TBA
Available Now

For The best Mech combat game for ages. Nice AI in the single player campaign and something different in multiplayer for diehard Quake players. Graphically identical to Tribes. Emphasis on action.

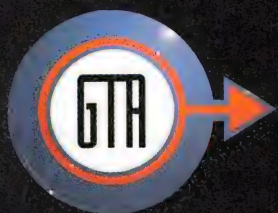
Against No big drawbacks, we can't really see why Starseige and Tribes couldn't be just one game, as it would have been an absolute classic war experience.

Need P166 (with 3D card), P200 (without). Win 9x/NT, 32Mb RAM

Want PII 266, Voodoo2 or Riva TNT. Home LAN, T3 net connection.

3D SUPPORT

Out of the box 3Dfx and TNT support, other OpenGL cards to follow.



GRAND THEFT AUTO

Mission Pack #1, London 1969

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GTA Mission Pack requires original GTA game disc to operate.

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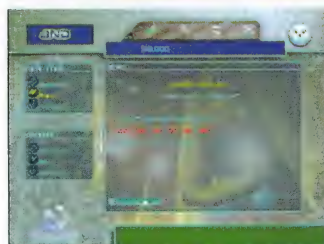
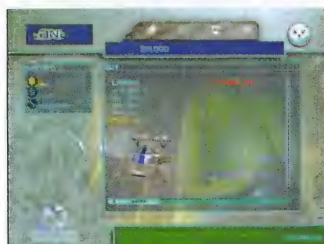
LANDER

Sci-fi meets hi-fi in this fiendishly difficult but ultimately rewarding "flight" sim

Every so often a game comes along and reminds you of what attracted you to an arcade in the first place. Lander from Psygnosis, is one such title. Psygnosis are known for games with interesting (read: out there) game concepts, so its refreshing to see a game that meets all the hype. Lander is a flight sim that has you controlling a small hovering aircraft, much like a helicopter. You have an over-the-shoulder perspective of your craft in three dimensional areas. You are a fortune hunter, who is hired to do the dirty work of certain fairly anonymous individuals for vast sums, no questions asked. If you think it sounds dull, wait until you see the gameplay. Lander also has the honour of being one of the first DVD-ROM games offering an enhanced video and audio experience.

Age-old arcade wisdom

Lander reminds me of the curious arcade titles of the early 1980s. You know, the ones that look fairly tame but are bloody hard to get the hang of. Beautiful in their simplicity. This is Lander for you, inspired by such ancient



80 PC PowerPlay

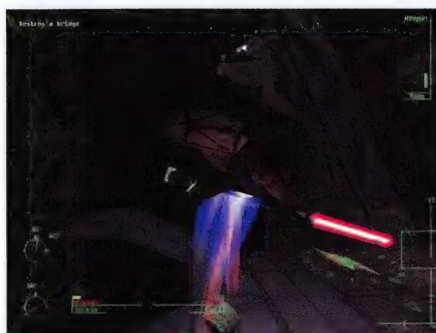


history as Thrust and Gravitator. With mouse and keyboard, you manoeuvre your little craft about. Sounds easy? Well, it is simply devilish! But absolutely absorbing at the same time. You have to be constantly aware of where you are, where you're going and how to avoid crashing into the ground!

Tougher than nuts

The point that has to be made (again) at this stage is that this game is hard! I don't mean by conventional standards either. To

On top of a stunning physics engine, Lander lavishes the player with story and atmosphere



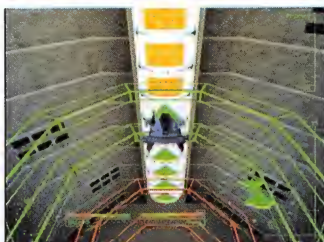
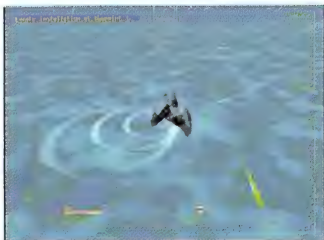
master Lander you're going to have to sacrifice a significant amount of time to come to grips with all the controls.

You basically have one source of propulsion: the thrust from underneath your ship. Controlling the movement of your ship involves adjusting the various tilts of your ship - forwards, backwards, left and right - while using the thrust. This is just the beginning, since your missions

involve the use of weaponry too. On first playing the game I thought: wow, this is pretty tough! But I stuck it out for an hour or two and got fairly proficient. But then I left it for a couple of days and came back to be totally useless once more! Lander demands some pretty heavy time investment. So is it worth it? Hell, yes!

Touchy-feely gaming

Just from running the training missions, you get the feel of why Lander is such a special experience. The physics of move-



Although Lander plays a bit like "bath time soap hockey", there's enough in this to challenge the most seasoned of players

ment, the modelling of motion within gravity, is astounding. It's hard to say whether it's truly realistic but it FEELS like it. Controlling the craft is perhaps closest to flying a helicopter (I imagine!) and you dip & lurch against gravity, with no help from the game at all! Suffice to say the joy of Lander is the control of a sensitive aircraft.

Tipped hats & trench coats

The mood of the game is also extremely satisfying. Between missions you respond to various forms of correspondence: personal, business and news. You receive job offers, personal letters, current events and even lotto numbers! In this way, your character and the climate of society are slowly revealed to you. The narrative involves the discovering of an ancient alien artefact found on Earth and the power struggle between your various employers for control of it. The game is really quite dark, having that kind of society-in-decay kick that has fed movies for the last two decades (Blade Runner et al). Perhaps most impressive is how understated and classy it all is. Your information reads like actual business and private documents, not like cloak-&-dagger James Bond stuff. I think Psygnosis have realised this is

PLUS+



not a game for casual players - Lander is for the serious gamer. So the serious nature is perfect for the game.

Upgrade ahoy!

You start out as a small time operator but as you earn more respect for your expertise, you'll earn more money for the tougher assignments. This allows you to upgrade to the serious machinery! You can upgrade your Lander from the humble Hopper to the Big Red, the Destria or the Roche 81. Each craft offers different advantages - some are for more precise stealth work, others will carry the biggest mother lode of weaponry for more upfront situations. Weapons, armour, engines and shields can also be upgraded or customised for your particular mission.

Almost non-linear

The game offers a number of streams through its 30 levels. You begin on the planet Mercury and progress outwards through Earth to Pluto, the most distant planet of our solar system. The

levels are tiered, so that if you don't meet certain requirements within a mission, you'll be sent to an easier successive level. Also, if you do particularly well in a certain mission you will be sent up to the harder levels. The final levels require almost flawless flying in order to see the real ending.

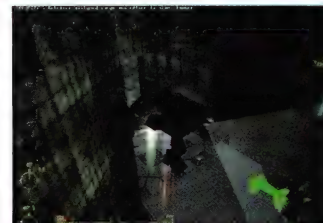
Bloody hard

The difficulty has been mentioned all along and I think that for certain gamers, this will be a fault in Lander. The first half dozen missions are challenging so I can't imagine what the end would be like! I doubt if there is the kind of general appeal in Lander to warrant it a bestseller status. The missions as well are more about smooth operating than blasting about the joint. So it's definitely for a particular audience. If you like fine gaming and have enough patience to weather the initiation, you should give Lander a chance.

Lander is a great game because it tries to present a real challenge to the gamer willing to put in the time. This is 3D futuristic flying that is extraordinary.

Bear in mind that it is unmercifully hard to get into and needs much attention. If that is all you've been wanting in a game then Lander is for you. Dark, intriguing, challenging - Lander is fantastic.

John Dewhurst



PLATINUM

95%

Category Flight Simulation
Players 1 - 16 (TCP/IP, IPX) 2 player cooperative
Publisher Psygnosis
Price \$TBA
Rating G
Available mid 99

For Challenging game-play, excellent physics and ship control, great mood, awesome sound-track.

Against Bloody, bloody hard! If you've no patience, leave it be!

Need P166, 32MB RAM, 4MB video card, 3D card

Want PII 300, 64MB RAM, 3D accel.

3D SUPPORT
D3D, Glide supported

X-WING ALLIANCE

Yes fans, it's yet another Star Wars game. Strangely, nobody seems sick of them yet. Maybe it's cos they're always soooooo good

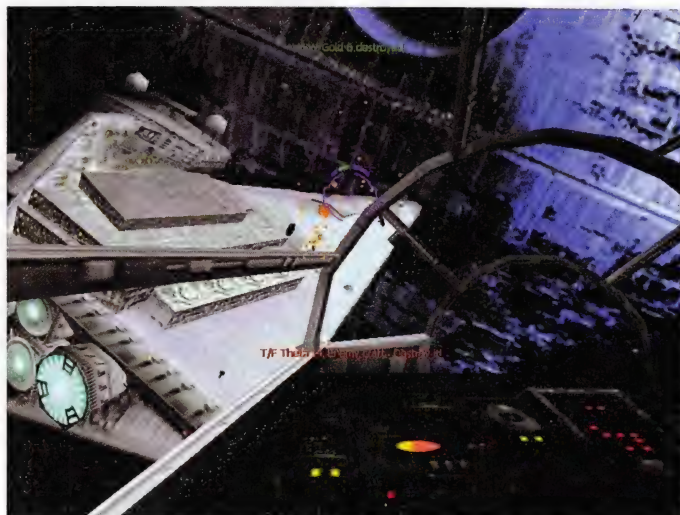
X-Wing Alliance is the fourth title in the series of space combat sims developed by Totally Games (headed by Larry Holland). To bring you all up to speed, the series includes the venerable X-Wing, the awe-inspiring TIE Fighter, and the multiplayer hit & single player flop - X Wing vs. TIE Fighter. You want gaming cred? Just drop a few of these names and see what happens. From the static screenshots and pre-release hype of X-Wing Alliance though, you'd almost be forgiven for passing this title off as more of the same and turning your attention elsewhere. We'd even let up a certain lack of interest in the existing Star Wars trilogy (a crime usually punishable by having to sit through the entire series of Battlestar Galactica...in one sitting!), especially since the Episode 1 trailer Mk. II was so unbelievable good (it becomes harder to look back when what's in front of you is THAT hot). While there are no doubt scores of Episode I, II and III titles on their way, X-Wing Alliance is the here and now. And sigh. It's all been done before...

It's in the details

But NEVER like this! X-Wing Alliance is pure class. Forget for a moment the implications of being able to fly the Millennium Falcon through the Death Star Mk. II in the game's final mission - XWA is essentially the next title in the series and thus contains plenty of familiar gameplay elements.

Totally Games have taken all the best bits from the previous games, given the visuals a subtle (yet underneath it all, massive too) make-over and then saturated the end result with an almost unimaginable amount of detail.

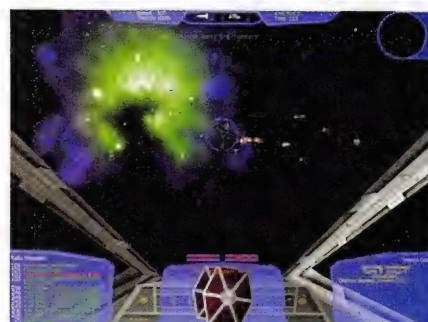
It's this detail that really sets X-Wing Alliance apart from its predecessors. The hangar bay from where you launch is always teeming with activity - shuttles arrive and depart, hangar droids skeeter about carrying out their various duties, and if you look carefully enough, you can see your little R2 unit turn its head as it goes through the pre-launch procedures. This detail carries to the space too. Get too close to the back of an Imperial Star Destroyer and your craft will shake and vibrate from the



engine wash. The cockpit lights up as a stray laser bolt darts just inches from your plasteel shell. Ships fly complex patterns and in near perfect formation too.

Old school interface

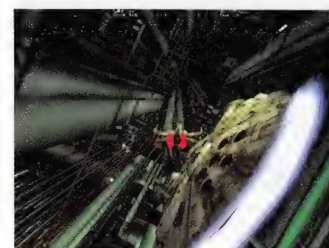
The functional yet thoroughly threadbare interface used in XWvsTIE has been given the thumb. In its place is the glorious interface of old, where gameplay



options can be found in the appropriate environment on screen. For example, click on the hologram, and you're whisked away to the data banks. Click on the corridor of the YT-1300 and you're taken to the main concourse area.

Working for the man

XWing Alliance details the alliance your family transport business forms with the Rebel Alliance. You start off running training missions and getting acquainted with the YT-1300 Corellian Transport (of which the Millennium Falcon is a heavily modified version of). Yep, all those wishes have been granted, and the end result is highly worth it. You can almost feel the bulk of the YT-1300 as you fly through





space. This transport handles like no other ship available. A feature which will never suffer from being labelled a novelty is the ability to let your co-pilot take the controls and jump into the gun turrets and do a spot of fly swatting a la Star Wars - A New Hope. The only disappointment being that the guns don't pulse in that satisfying way they do in the movie. A minor whinge though.

Perfect balance

As you familiarise yourself with the family business and start exploring the plot, you eventually join the Rebel Alliance and gain access to more traditional movie style missions in all manner of well-known craft (like the X-Wing, the Y-Wing, B-Wing, etc). So that you don't miss the confines of the reliable YT1300, the Alliance missions are interspersed with family business missions on the side. A perfect gameplay balance that helps keep things interesting.

It's alive!

Space combat in XWA hasn't deviated in flavour from its predecessors. Except now everything looks a heck of a lot prettier, the AI has been turned up a few notches, and the universe seems more alive in general. Your cockpit reacts to damage and external interference, and the light sourcing from explosions and laser bolts temporarily light up your cockpit for the duration. They're all small touches, but just try going back to the earlier games in the series. The visual detail is superb, though is lost without a 3D accelerator.

Muse-ful

Star Wars without the distinctive sounds and the well-worn score is a bit like watching Charlie and the Chocolate Factory in black and white. So Totally Games went and did two things to ensure the audio of X-Wing Alliance was up



to scratch. They plundered the Lucas Film vaults and re-recorded the majority of sound effects used in the game, and brought back the much fabled IMuse audio system. With IMuse, the in-game score changes according to the action on screen. So when an Imperial Star Destroyer enters the system, your first cue will be the Darth Vader March tune that interrupts the existing score. This was a feature sorely missing from X-Wing vs TIE Fighter, even though it would have been a real bugger to incorporate. Other than that, XWA does the Star Wars sound bytes particularly well - though we could never have expected any less.

Please sir, can I...

The timing of X-Wing Alliance however, is slightly perplexing. Episode I is around the corner and with it comes fresh new material to power the Star Wars Game. We all know Yoda is a bit of a sex god (the ears! the ears!!) and that Chewbacca is the ultimate aphrodisiac, but is there room for yet another Star Wars title based on episodes IV, V and VI?

If a game based on a fictional universe (which is known and understood better than our real one) that happens to re-use some of the most well-worn movie (and gaming) sound bytes and vision can still have you sitting on the edge of your seat, hands literally glued to the joystick, then there's room for plenty more of games such as this. X-Wing Alliance represents a near perfect harmony between hard



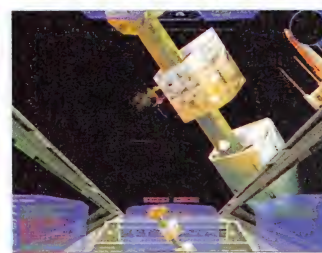
core space action, story, and story development.

Personality plus

It's the closest ANY game of this kind has come to providing a cinematic and engrossing experience, without the excessive use of hammy cut-scenes. It may not have a more dynamic engine like that seen in Descent Freespace, or the detail of I-War, but it does have oodles of personality. It also has a stack of options. Multiplayer is almost friendlier than XWvsTIE, and easily more configurable. There are 20 ships to fly, plenty of space locations to hoon through, and then plenty of little additions (you may miss them the first time around) that perfectly complement the gorgeous gameplay.

XWA is a game that extends the existing Star Wars gaming universe and will perfectly bring you into the next generation of Star Wars gaming bliss. And you can tear through the Death Star MK II in the original Millennium Falcon too.

March Stepnik



The coloured lighting looks great, and actually serves to be a very practical effect

GOLD
94%

Category Space Combat Sim
Players 1-8 (LAN), 1-4 (Internet - TCP/IP)
Publisher LucasArts/Metro
Price \$TBA
Rating TBA
Available Now

For Detail, detail, detail! Great story, lots of variety and plenty of replayability. The most realistic and enjoyable game in the series.

Against Some textures are a little bland looking and the mission tree isn't dynamic.

Need Win 95, P200, 32Mb RAM

Want PII 350, graphics accelerator, 64Mb RAM

3D SUPPORT
D3D

TOCA 2

Like a cross between dodgems, go-karts and road rage, TOCA 2 has it all for adrenalin racers.

TOCA! TOCA! TOCA! We hailed, during most of last year. This cry of adoration was heard throughout the land, as we immersed ourselves in the racing game that changed everything. TOCA was the first proper multiplayer racing game, is why. Yes, yes, yes, save your letter paper readers, TOCA was far from the first ever, of this nature, but what TOCA managed was to bring together all the essential elements of what makes a great multiplayer racing game. That is: anyone could drive competitively without much training, yet still be perfecting their style months later, together with that rather nice way that spinning off rarely meant race-over - Grand Prix 2's multiplayer killer.

The safety of the sedan box-shape made TOCA the masterful racing game that it is. Bumping and grinding at great velocities with minimal risk of spinning off - yet with realistic physics, made for a racing game that felt like no other.

The PlayStation thing

As with all things though, TOCA was great but not quite perfect. As has been the way lately, Codemasters opted for a major fine-tuning for their sequel, as opposed to creating a grand and mighty all-new game. Bless 'em, for they have done much good. Every area, every minor weakness, every little detail - it's all been given a great whopping once-over.

Well, almost. The single biggest irritation with TOCA was the need to 'unlock' tracks and special cars by progressively and successfully working your way through a championship. Bloody stupid, it was. And it's still there. Being the only negative, we'll dump on it right here and move on. We PC gamers like to believe we have a hardcore simulation, and those games historically have everything open to the play-



Racing is fast and often brutal - sensational!

er from the outset. This 'unlocking tracks' thing is straight out of the "How to make a successful PlayStation game" manual and the sooner cracks and cheat codes circulate that fix this stupidity the sooner we'll have the TOCA 2 that god intended.

Stay on track

Right. The good. TOCA 2 is approximately one shitload easier than the original, yet manages to be just as much of a technical challenge. As much as we all loved TOCA, we all bitched cease-

lessly about the driving model. It felt right, but was just weird and unpredictable enough to make mastering it a case of learning the Programmer's idea of a dri-

ving model, rather than applying real-world physics. Now, it's better. TOCA 2 cars feel more naturally right, which in turn makes the sim more drivable, and in





turn, more enjoyable. Now we can boldly muscle opponent cars out of the way with little fear of incurring a spin of equal or greater proportions. Marvellous.

Naturally, with humungously potent CPUs and 3D accelerators from hell, we expect all new games to look better than the girl next door the first time she got drunk, and TOCA 2 is a right treat. On a PC in the 300MHz vicinity, TOCA 2 will run fluidly at 1024 x 768 (accelerated). Better again if you own a TNT-based video card. The Codemasters 3D engine, of which TOCA 2 is an evolution, just loves the Riva TNT chipset, and unless you

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Auto Trader

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BRITISH TOURING CAR
CHAMPIONSHIP

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<http://www.btcc.co.uk/index.htm>

have an SLI setup for your Voodoo 2's, it'll always run faster on TNT. And look better, because while Voodoo 2 maxes-out at 1024 x 768, TOCA 2 on the TNT will run at up to an stunning 1600 x 1200 in full 32-bit colour! On a P2 400 with TNT, it did indeed run at

this amazing resolution - but at a non-playable 12-14 fps. Dropping to 16-bit colour adds another half a dozen frames with no noticeable graphic loss. On the same TNT P2 400, running on medium detail at 1280 x 1024 in 16-bit colour was ideal.

Track City baby

Being based on a Real World Thing, TOCA 2 sets out to replicate a year in the life of the British Touring Car Championships. A good thing, this, for the collection of tracks in this series is amongst the finest ever seen on a computer screen. Best of all, they're the same as they always have been, which means we've played them to death in the original TOCA and know them all backwards. This could work against the new game, but the new and sparkling graphics make it a new treat and the familiarity is simply a convenience for experienced TOCA racers. These tracks are spot-on perfect for a hard multiplayer thrash. With the thrilling exception of the wild and bumpy roller-coaster Brand Hatch track, it's damn hard to come off anywhere on the remaining tracks.

For those too intimidated by the technically superior



(but frighteningly difficult) Grand Prix Legends, this is your racing game.

Codemasters, being predominantly a console game company, do love their secret cars and tracks. The first TOCA was lame in this respect - sure, the PlayStation crowd may have yelled in joyous exaltation as they threaded their pink Cadillac through the impossible volcanic track, but, really... This time around Codies have done it right. Track-wise, each of the many bonus tracks are showpieces of the track designer's craft. Last night I was ripping around the huge and hilly Loch track, thinking of how similar in concept it was to the original Need for Speed's Alpine track, when I decided (as one does at the end of an arduous racing evening) to go exploring. A couple of roads leading off "somewhere" are obvious while you rip around at light-speed. I was sure they went about 50 metres before halting at the old invisible wall. No! Almost every track has a pointless not-so-secret bit - and they go for miles into the outback, offering funky jumps, banked sections and more. We driving fans like to think we're racing a full-on hardcore sim, but we like this sort of fluff, we do.

Do please take a look at TOCA 2, even if you're not a regular PC racer. Fun is fun, and TOCA 2 is nothing but. Fun?

Replays feature the most impressive camera views ever. Stunning stuff

What of those that choose to believe they are driving an ultra-realistic sim? That too, you get the lot with TOCA 2. Thanks Codies, you've done it again.

Ben Mansill

GOLD

91%

Category Racing
Players 1-8
Publisher Codemasters
Price \$89.95
Rating TBA
Available Now

For Instantly playable but with an appreciably steep learning curve, looks amazing, sounds amazing, multiplayer perfection.

Against Still need to 'unlock' tracks, doesn't display all driver's fastest laps at the end of a race.

Need Win 95 or 98, Pentium 200MHz, 32Mb RAM, 55Mb Hard Disk space, Direct X 6.0 supported 3D Graphics Card (PCI/AGP) with 4Mb RAM

Want Pentium II 266 MHz, 32mb RAM, TNT Graphics Card.

3D SUPPORT
D3D

REDLINE

The coming together of fast paced shooting action with weapons laden driving fun makes for a great experience



keep you going in between missions. For what it's worth, here's a brief rundown on the events that precede your entrance into the fray. In the 1950s, a scientist named Reich discovers some new wonder substance that he calls Orgone. With it, he works out a way to produce limitless energy and solve heaps of the world's problems. The Government and Oil companies host a coverup, and put the material to use for themselves. Through a rather convoluted series of events, the World Government sets off a series of nuclear detonations on the moon, killing most of the people on earth as a result of massive tidal waves, flooding, and so on. Anyway, to cut a long story just a little shorter, the insiders (as the Government figures come to be known) hide underground in comfort and seclusion, and those left on the surface join violent gangs and lead violent lives and all the usual post-apocalyptic stuff. The insiders set up cameras to watch the gangs fight, sponsoring their favourites, and kitting them out with weapons, cars and such.

Deal/kill dichotomy

You begin as a novice apprentice to one of the gangs, and your task is to work your way up through the ranks until you're the leader - though to get there you're going to have to deal with other jealous gang members as well as a veritable plethora of rival gangs. And by 'deal' I mean 'kill', obviously.

The game engine runs smoothly enough, but movement does seem rather jerky, and I found it very annoying that anytime I went near a wall, or fence or whatever I would invariably become stuck for half a second or so. It might not seem a long time, but when you're desperately trying to avoid a hefty rocket propelled grenade zeroing in on your skull, it does tend to annoy you juuust a little bit.

Flying chainsaw

Don't get me wrong though,

a few problems here and there, is well worth of your attention.

Two become one

It's quite an interesting game, and a useful adaptation of the burgeoning driving/running about shooter. It's not quite an original concept, but it is fresh enough to make you sit up and take notice, especially when the execution is of this quality. Sure, the game engine isn't quite good enough to make jaws drop, but it's perfectly adequate for both the driving and the times when

you're required to get on your feet and run around 'Quake' style. Though the graphics quality doesn't quite match the latest in FPS games like Half-Life, Unreal, et al, it is functional, and does feature 3D acceleration to make it look all that much prettier.

Costnerish storyline

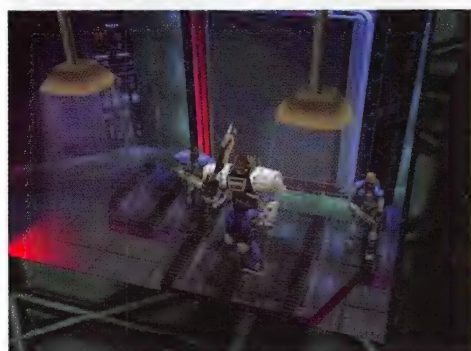
Now, fair enough, the storyline is of the quality you might find in a Kevin Costner film (starring, written, and directed by, natch), but it does still serve to give you enough impetus to

When you think about it, it's a bit strange that there haven't been more games such as this lately. The FPS genre has become well and truly entrenched as wildly popular, and the appeal of driving around really really fast in a car laden with high tech weaponry cannot be denied either. Put the two together and you're looking at what should be a very popular and very fun game. Redline is, in many ways, a successful combination of the two, and apart from



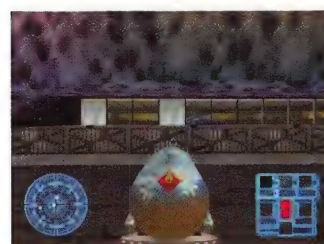


I'm on a road to nowhere!



this is not intolerable - far from it. For the most part, the first person parts of the game work fine. There's a great array of weapons on offer, from a buzzsaw that can be used to fly short distances (sort of the equivalent of a rocket jump), a shotgun, machine gun, grenade launcher, sniper rifle, rocket launcher, minigun, and a couple of energy weapons too. Ammunition and health packs are gained in the usual fashion - either from vanquished foes or just by finding them scattered about the place.

The weaponry for the cars is different again, with a variety of heat seeking missiles, rockets, high speed guns, and various energy weapons. To repair your car, you just need to run over one of the helpfully prevalent 'repair' powerups and magically



your vehicle will be as good as new, and there are also weapon maximiser powerups scattered all over the place too. In many ways, car combat is a little unsatisfying - but only a little. The physics are far from realistic, cars bounce far too much and

show no ill effects from being badly damaged (you can't blow a tyre or anything like that, for example). The main problem I found was that car combat often ended up with me running into an opponent head on and pumping them full of hurt until they blew up, then quickly running over a repair powerup and moving on to the next foe - you do seem to have much more powerful weapons than your adversaries in most instances. Still, driving around maniacally and powersliding to face an adversary is quite a bit of fun. And, in true Carmageddon style, you'll also be faced with bad guys on foot who splat merrily when you run over them - you'll never get sick of this.

Engaging tasks

The missions are plentiful and varied, most require you to both run around and drive at different points to accomplish your goals, which have been nicely set out with the cutscenes that use the game engine in between missions. Changing from being on foot to driving around is as simple as pressing a key to jump out (and turning on the car alarm) or running into the door of an available car. There's no difficulty level to choose though, and many parts of the missions almost right from the start of the game are quite difficult to accomplish, so you'll have to be



ready to save and reload quite often. Most of the game takes place outdoors, in large open areas, though with no slowdown in frame rate, which is lovely.

In a very nice touch, often the tasks you are set require you to think just a little bit about how to achieve them, rather than just going from point A to switch B, and then on to switch C to explode the bad guy's big bad apparatus. At times it can be a bit frustrating trying to figure out how to fulfil your goals, but examining everything around you (and, more often than not, blowing it up) will give some clue as to how to progress.

Plenty of goodness

So while perhaps there isn't quite enough that's new or cutting edge about Redline, what's there is certainly entertaining and fun. The melding of both driving and first person action makes for a nice change, and the engine used has proved versatile enough to cope with the two perspectives adequately. And with multiplayer over the Internet for up to 12 players (which is a hoot, at least for a while), there's enough to keep you interested for quite a while.

Gareth Jones



83%

Category Driving/FPS hybrid
Players Accolade
Publisher 1-8 (TCP/IP, IPX)
Price Now
Rating M15+
Available \$89.95

For A new twist, with a great combination of First Person action and Arcade driving and shooting fun. Plentiful missions, and good multiplayer support

Against Though the engine works well for both on-foot action and driving, the on-foot section isn't quite up to the level you would expect from a FPS only game. There's no difficulty levels to choose from, and later missions do become very difficult.

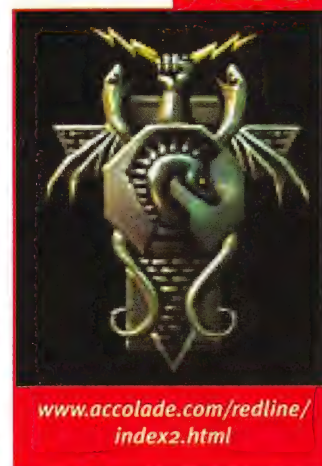
Need P200, 32Mb RAM, Win 9x, Direct 3D compatible 3D accelerator card

Want PII 266, 64Mb RAM

3D SUPPORT

All Direct 3D compatible cards are supported

PLUS+



www.accolade.com/redline/index2.html

SHANE WARNE CRICKET 99

It's action-oriented cricket at its finest. Simple controls, intuitive gameplay, and lovely commentary. Let the chanting begin; Waaar-neyyyy!

Australian cricket is at a great turning point. Mark Taylor has bowed out as Australian Captain and Steve Waugh is just getting his feet wet as our new captain - it's an exciting time. Will our dominance of world cricket continue? Is it too much to hope that Australian cricket gaming is also at a turning point? Frankly, cricket on the PC doesn't have a magnificent history and many avid cricket fans wouldn't have the time of day for the average cricket game. Recent cricket interest has been centred on Australian Cricket Captain, which was fantastic for the Bob Simpson in all of us. But if whacking some boundaries is

more your style, then Shane Warne Cricket is the perfect reason to give cricket gaming another go.

Shane who?

This title was originally Brian Lara Cricket and stays that way elsewhere in the world. It seems obvious to choose Shane Warne as its namesake here in Australia since he is our most famous, flamboyant and frequently dangerous player. I wonder whether they were counting on him being chosen as the new captain, though. Anyway, Steve Waugh is your default captain in the game with Mark Taylor still selectable for the die-hard fans of recent history.



But really, would it have been so hard to include more comprehensive multiplay?



Simple, but deep

This is sports action gaming, so the idea is to make it as simple as possible. It's quite a challenge to make a game simple enough to jump right in but have enough depth to keep you there after forty minutes! Whether you are bowling or batting you have the directional keys and four buttons to control your player. It's interesting that Codemasters have made the players, particularly the batsmen, so sensitive to

control. If you decide to whack over square leg and just hold that direction before the ball is bowled, you slowly creep away from your wickets. The idea is to decide on what shot to make just as the ball leaves the bowler's hand - just like in a real game of cricket. As a bowler you have a regular delivery and two special deliveries to choose from, so that you can mix up your attack. There is the typical inclusion of left & right handers, pace and spin bowlers. Shane Warne Cricket offers a great combination of depth and simplicity.

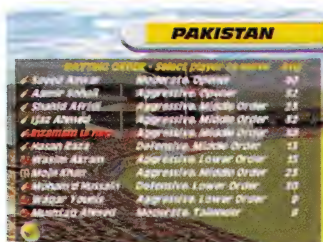
Super idea, that

In the game you can play as any of the major international teams including the old favourite, Zimbabwe. Almost every kind of cricket is represented: World Cup, Test Matches, and One Day Internationals as well as friendly games. In some games you can choose the number of overs. The only types of cricket not represented are club matches and French cricket! One of the smartest inclusions is scenario-type challenge matches. Take the reins as India slump at 2 for 23 against Australia in the World Cup final of 1996 or England vs Australia at the Oval 1997 - bowl out the Aussies for less than 126 to win. Super idea for a bit of variety in play, considering that there is no multi-player option, which is (sadly) becoming a bit of a trend among sports games.

Roy, HG; beautiful

This is a big call but I reckon the commentary in Shane Warne Cricket is the best I've

WORLD CUP					
NEXT MATCH					
N ZEALAND V INDIA					
GROUP 2					
WIN	3	0	0	0	
SEL	4	3	1	0	
PAK	4	2	1	0	
AUS	3	2	1	0	
W	4	1	3	0	
UAE	4	0	0	0	



heard in a sports game. Forget the generic "I'm Joe Sportsguy - Welcome to Twaddle Sports. It's going to be a great match between (pause) ENGLAND and (pause) BRAZIL...", followed by intermittent, repetitive and irrelevant remarks. Your commentators are Geoff Boycott & Anthony Agnew and they do a fantastic job. The commentary here sounds authentic and suits the mood of the game perfectly. Three cheers for Codemasters! It's only a pity that the title was the only thing they changed for Australian gamers. It would have been nice to have Tony

Greig and Richie Benaud in the commentary box - or better yet Roy & H.G.! Nah, it'd never happen...

No remap

The overall design elements of the game are excellent. Menus and feature displays are clean and functional, making it easy to get to what you want. The only problem that comes to mind is the fact that keyboard controls are located in a separate document in your SWC 99 folder on your desktop - which means that they can't be customised. Another gripe is the fact that you can't quit a game and start a new one without quitting to Windows first. Still, these are minor flaws in a generally problem-free control setup.

Instinctual sloggish

The motion-captured players look super but can seem a little sluggish at times. In this kind of

game, the recreation of batting is always a hard task, since it is so instinctive. It will take a while to get used to the controls of both batting and bowling, and even then you may not feel in control some of the time. This is the conundrum of cricket games and some people won't ever be satisfied. However, if you are even halfway keen on cricket, this game is as good as it gets.

Almost there

Shane Warne Cricket 99 is far and away the best action cricket title on the PC. Its combination of great presentation, variety of play and easy-to-use controls make it a winner. For the Australian cricket fan and gamer, this is a great game and absolutely worth owning. It is certainly a step into the present and it's great to finally see a batch of fun, playable cricket games. While I'd stop short of saying this is a fantastic game or Game of the Year, Codemasters are getting there. The great dream is that this heralds the imminent arrival of the truly unmissable cricket game.

John Dewhurst



It's not quite the perfect action cricket sim, but it is easily the best yet

86%

Category Sports
Players 1-2 (same computer)
Publisher Codemasters
Price \$89.95
Rating G
Available Now

For Cricket gaming at its best (so far), commentary is fantastic, options are useful, the complete package.

Against Players can seem sluggish, control can seem iffy at times, not a classic - but we're getting there!

Need P166 (with 3D card), P200 (w/o 3D card), Win9x, 4Mb SVGA card, 16Mb RAM

Want P200, 32Mb RAM, 3D card

3D SUPPORT

3Dfx, Riva TNT supported, almost all others with Direct3D and software.



ASGHAN

It's the tale of a young hero, battling poor controls, boring level design, silly combat, and uninspired clichés. And that's just the reviewer...

Tis a tale of a young, virile and unfeasibly-proportioned warrior named Asghan. Of revenge against an evil uncle who killed thine father and banished thyself from thine homeland of Brightmoon. Not to mention causing thee to speaketh like a twat. 'Tis a tale of a treacherous and mysterious place called Kyrk, the kind of region that in such medieval times would have been marked on any good map with the simple cautionary phrase "Here Be Dragons". Most of all, though, this is a tale of a distinct smell, that is - and I'm quoting from the manual here - the "smell of death". There'll be someone later on who has "murder in his eyes" or "blood on his hands", I've no doubt.

Gimme my seat back!

Cast as the bold and courageous Asghan, it's your task to venture into Kyrk and reclaim your rightful seat on the throne of Brightmoon. Doing thus will mean embarking on a quest throughout which a great many dangers await. A quest that pitches you into countless potentially fatal battles; that requires you call upon previously untapped reserves of endurance and stamina; that involves numerous moments of death-defying bravery; and demands nerves of steel to withstand such a punishing ordeal. If I was one of Gremlin's publicists, perhaps attempting to

disguise the fact that a forthcoming release was somewhat less than good, then that is how I might try to promote this new game.

Not real good

Of course, what I wouldn't tell you, however, is that the main danger is the risk of being bored to death. Nor would I mention that the outcome of those potentially fatal battles is more or less dependent on sheer luck. Details of how that endurance and



Thrill to the sight of Asghan standing under a shower of wobbly white lines without flinching once! What a hero!

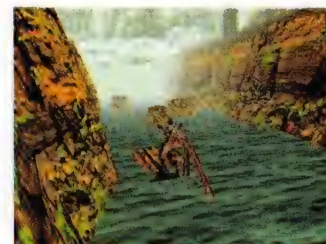


And, certainly, not a word need be uttered that such nerves of steel are brought to bear mainly with the aim of quashing the frustrations resulting from the shocking collision detection. If I really were one of Gremlin's publicists, then I'm hardly likely to admit that my new game trowled the depths of mediocrity and, consequently, surfaces with all the usual clichés, incompetence and lack of inspiration you'd expect.

Hit, and mostly miss

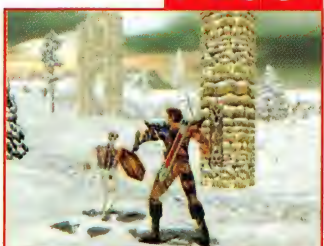
Initial impressions might suggest a kind of Tomb Raider meets Heretic 2 combination has been forged, but further inspection shows such a com-

stamina will be drained completely by the ill-conceived and patience-sapping level design would be kept to a bare minimum. While I'd probably brush over the way those moments of death-defying bravery are usually, but not always, due to the inept and inflexible controls.





parison to be unfounded. What we have here instead is a fairly run-of-the-mill action game. Foes must be fought and vanquished, jumps must be made and ledges climbed, power-up weapons and armour need to be collected, and the route through the level has to be traversed in a straightforward manner. With combat, the first few chinks in Asghan's armour can be detected. Your hero



<http://www.silmarils.com/english/jeux/asghan.htm>

PLUS+

mine) has a range of moves available to him, all accessed through holding down Ctrl and Shift in conjunction with the arrow keys. It's all quite simplistic and leaves little room for any degree of strategy. Unlike the intricacies of fighting games like Tekken 3 or Virtua Fighter 3, here there's no option other than simply pounding the keyboard. Coupled with a collision detection that seems to discount factors such as proximity (so you can be standing chest-to-chest with an enemy and still manage to swing that sword with force) and accuracy, combat victory is literally a case of hit and miss.

Oh no! Spike pits! Again.

Ranged weapons function somewhat differently, with crossbows and such aimed from a first-person view. As a feature

cribbed from Zelda 64, you might expect this method to work better than the melee combat - and, indeed, it does. However, rather than a stroke of genius, such a feature is remarkable as merely one of the few praiseworthy parts of the game. On the whole, the controls are still fairly awful. If the ranged weapons work well, then the running and, especially, the jumping fail dismally. Trust me, you'll be replaying even the simplest leaps across - yawn - spike-filled pits time and time again. Perhaps the game's major shortcoming, though, is the linear nature of each level. With Asghan restricted to trekking along the one path for much of the game, a feeling of monotony sets in and with it any sense of exploration is lost. To put it simply, when you're not annoyed by the control flaws, you'll be bored



Obviously Asghan doesn't have a chance in this fight. His opponent's sword appears to be able to slice straight through stone...

by the predictable obstacles and hackneyed setting.

Much like its eponymous hero, Asghan is an insipid and mostly forgettable game. Gremlin were clearly intent on making a console-inspired action/adventure for the PC. Yet, in doing so, they've studied only the most superficial aspects and thus created a shallow and mindless game. Sadly, all the same old stereotypes concerning console gaming have been reinforced and PC gamers miss out once again.

Gareth Jones

43%

Category Action
Players 1
Publisher Gremlin
Price \$TBA
Rating M
Available Now

For It's marginally better than Dark Vengeance. Erm... look, it doesn't matter what I write here, I'd still be damning with faint praise.

Against Pathetically uninspired fantasy hack and slash. Run, kill, curse the controls, run, jump, kill, curse the controls, run, etc. Whatever, the end result is always the same - unrelenting tedium.

Need P120, 16Mb RAM, 4xCD

Want P200, 32Mb RAM, 3Dfx

3D SUPPORT
3dfx only

FIGHTER SQUADRON

The Screamin' Demons over Europe

One of the last WWII sims off the block, Activision nail a new genre.

Once again the roar of 4 x 1200 hp 9 cylinder radial engines reverberates across my room as I pilot out a B-17G Flying Fortress in *Fighter Squadron: The Screamin' Demons Over Europe* (FSSD). And vibrate I do, as I clutch my Microsoft Sidewinder Force Feedback Pro, ably supported by a Creative's Sound Blaster Live and Four Point Surround Sound system. Tracer flashes past the cockpit as "bandits six o'clock high" screams over the interphone from the Tail and Waist Gunners. The whole desk is shaking, as well as the image on the screen as all guns let loose on the bandit. The enemy is bound to pass underneath I

think, so I punch F7 and take over the Bottom Ball Turret. F6 to gain control of the gun and there he is! I can hear him moving under us! Swing the guns with the joystick, lead the target and fire with twin .50 cal's. He sweeps past with part of his tail plane missing to break off the engagement.

So near, yet...

I had just occupied two of the ten playable positions in the B17 in FSSD! These extend from the bombardier to the tail gunner, and you'll find this capability in all multi-seated aircraft. Is this gaming or what? Unfortunately, this multi-position gaming only exists in offline play. On-line play limits you to dogfighting in



For years we begged for a useable 3D cockpit. Now they're everywhere & we take it for granted. Ungrateful bastards, the lot of us



single and dual engined fighters. Activision really could have pulled off a coup if they had enabled multipositional play in one or more aircraft, while online. Nonetheless, FSSD is a new experience in sound, show and feeling; in much the same way that *Saving Private Ryan* introduced us to the sound and feeling of war through new "impact" cinematography.

Plywood planes

As you enter the game, you choose to fight for the English, German or US forces over the English Channel, German Rhineland or Northern Africa. Prepare to fight and die in single engined airframes; the FW-190, P-51D Mustang, Spitfire and

Typhoon. Then migrate to the twin engined P-38J Lightning, the mainly plywood British Mosquito, the German Ju-88 and ME-262 jet fighter. Finally, brace yourselves for not one but two, four engined aircraft, the B-17G Flying Fortress, and the Dambusting Avro Lancaster.

Hidden mission editor

The game offers 30 missions, ten in each scenario, and each of the missions can be flown from any of the three sides. All in all that equals 90 missions. 90 is of course a finite number, and not equal to a random dynamic mission generator's capabilities, but Activision have helped out here with a Mission Editor. This tool is not in the game proper. In fact, I could not find any reference to how you might start the tool in the paper or online manual! Luckily I found it by digging around inside the *Fighter Squadron* Directory,





Screenshots Demos



clicked on the file called MissionEditor.exe, and away I went. Not good at all guys! This would confuse some users.

Insane AI

Nonetheless, a great tool it is! You can intuitively build missions and swap them just as you can with other quality games. Plan your mission profile, set waypoints, write better Mission Briefings than those in FSSD! Then set the AI for enemy or friendly in skill, aggression, loyalty, morale and sanity! Yes sanity...you can set it anywhere from "a few short of the six pack" to perfectly sane. Now there's a variable. I'll just ask Charles Manson for a definition of sane! Good work Activision.

Vibrating

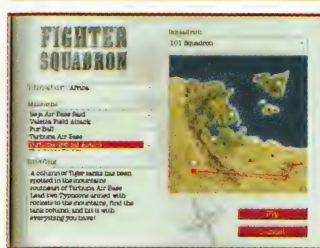
Arc up the engines and they cough and splutter to life. The cockpit vibrates, everything vibrates; it's as though you are really inside, I've never seen anything quite like it. Engine sounds vary for each aircraft, not the best, but they do vary. Flight model...well...it's



there, but it's not what I expected. Each aircraft does behave differently, but they don't bleed speed all that much, and it's very difficult to get into a spin.

Geller-ish propellers

While there is some great damage modelling, there's some really poor modelling also. Sometimes wings will shear off for no reason, and even the propellers will bend and stop the engine while you sit there on the ground! No reason, just does it....ummm, but it does look good after a ditching. I also wondered why when on a solo mission, someone yells "Bandits 11 O'clock high!" and I'm the only guy around? One word of wisdom; if you intend to load the game onto anything except C: Drive, grab the patch from



www.activision.com. The game always thinks the CD is in D: Drive unless you run this patch.

Multiplayer dream

Activision obviously had a change of heart and aimed the game at all skill levels, and the multiplayer market. It is a dog-fighting multiplayer's dream, albeit with a few glitches in other areas. There's also a bonus Combat Aircraft Encyclopaedia CD that comes with the game. Good value, many aircraft to fly, multiple "in aircraft" positions, but not up there with EAW, WWII Fighters or MSCFS.

Maj Ian Lindgren

PLUS+



The first thing you should do when competent is log onto the net and take the multiplayer option to one of Activision's web of servers world wide. They have even set up one in Australia! Just click, join a game, chat with the other guys, and hey, you're in for hours of fun.

Not a viewpoint you'll see much of in-game, but on a magazine page - pure magic!

85%

Category WWII Flight sim
Players 1 to 8(IPX, TCP/IP)
Publisher Activision
Price \$89.95
Rating G
Available Now

For Absolutely the easiest way to get into cooperative multiplayer gaming on the Internet. The feeling of motion and vibration adds so much realism to the game that you "feel" inside the cockpit.

Against No random dynamic mission generator, and the Mission Editor should have been built in to the game proper. A real pity that on-line multipositional gameplay is not offered in the game. Some shoddy damage modelling, and despite its long development time, a feeling that it is not quite finished.

Need P200, Direct 3D compatible video card, 32 Mb RAM

Want P266, 12Mb Voodoo2, 64Mb RAM

3D SUPPORT

D3D and 3Dfx are both supported

BLACKSTONE CHRONICLES

An eerily horrific storyline does a lot to carry this through, but the threadbare gameplay is a disappointment

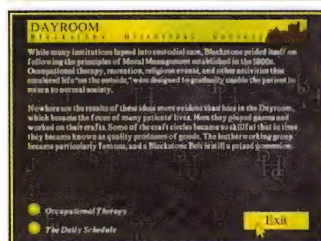
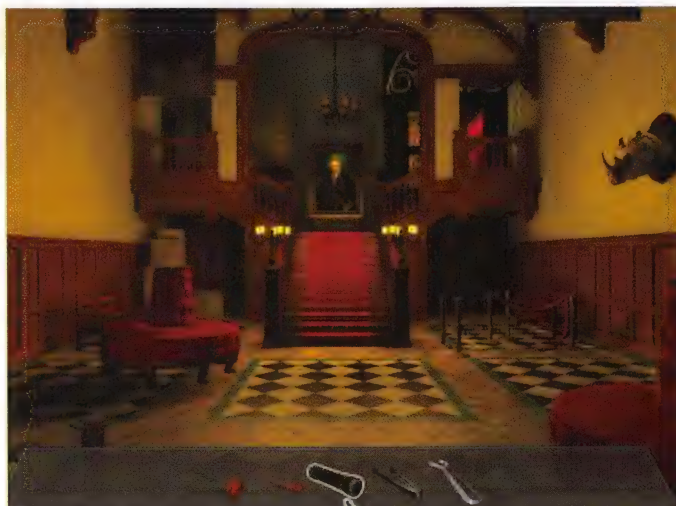
Recently, Thief has been scaring me senseless with its cavalcade of snarling zombies, wailing ghosts, and an unending supply of heart-stopping, suspense-filled moments. Blackstone Chronicles, on the other hand, offers an altogether different kind of fright. One that is disturbing, appalling, grotesque and made all the more so when you realise that much of what the game describes actually occurred not too many years ago.

Dead dad

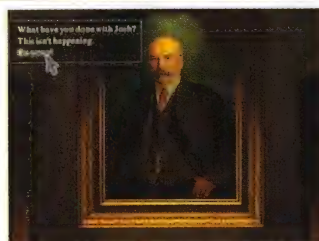
Blackstone is gothic, small town America. It's also home to the newly renovated Museum of Psychiatric History. Once the site of a mental institution, the museum is due to be opened to the public in only a few days. Cast as Oliver Metcalf, you are the son of the Dr Malcolm Metcalf, the last superintendent employed at the institution before its closure. At the beginning of the game, you have just arrived at the museum to track down your son, Joshua, who has been kidnapped by your terrifyingly insane and thoroughly dead father. You have until dawn to find him.

Bad dad

Inside the grand old museum, you are almost entirely alone. The game is peppered with other characters with whom you can talk, but none of



them are alive. Approach the imposingly framed portrait at the top of the main hall's staircase and you can speak with your father's ghost. Likewise, throughout the wards and rooms of the rest of the building, other ghosts lurk. All were at one stage residents - patients, victims, prisoners, you decide - of the institution and now, even in death, they haunt the place, just as your father (and what he did all those years ago) still haunts them.



Potty seat

Thus we have the basic premise for a horror-themed Myst clone, something akin to Shivers or even The 7th Guest. Many of the required elements seem in place - the confined play area, the isolated and lonely experience, the polished sheen graphics, the "on-rails" movement - yet Legend have added just enough to elevate Blackstone Chronicles above those two games. Of most attention is just how genuinely dis-



Mum told me that my toy bunny Fluffy had to go away... now I know better

turbing the game proves to be. Visit the fever therapy room and discover how patients were stripped naked, strapped to a chair, encased in a wooden box and left to suffer in the dark, all supposedly in the name of treating their illness. Compounding the humiliation, a small hole was cut into the seat of the chair to allow you to defecate, but the men were forced to just piss all over themselves.

As easy as ECT

While you're in the basement level, why not pop over to the ECT (electroconvulsive therapy) chamber and listen to Nick relate his numerous gripping and shocking tales (literally) of a treatment that always ended in either tears, vomit or brain damage. What impresses me here is how these things haven't been included just to "gross you out". Instead, there's a matter-of-factness about the place that is undoubtedly more effective at evoking the all-pervading, unsettling atmosphere.





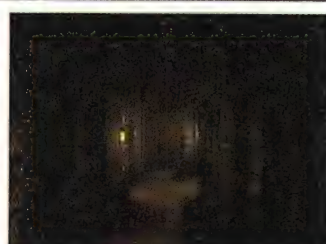
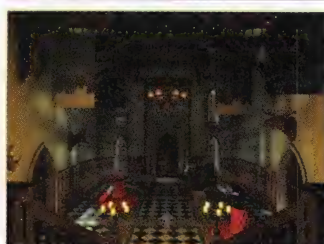
...But little storyline

That's not to say this is a game without its share of problems. Despite the promising setting and fascinating detail, the story is too thin and the gameplay too contrived to be compelling. In nearly every room, you will find a display case featuring a touch-screen monitor and a couple of relevant items. The monitors provide plenty of useful information about the institution and its patients, as do the items that can sometimes also be picked up. It's a nice idea, since this is a museum after all, but it's not nearly substantial enough upon which to base an entire game. These displays provide a major part of the gameplay, rather than the interesting sideline they ought to be.

Predictable

When you're not fiddling with the displays, you will be

chatting with the various ghostly inhabitants of the building. Interaction with the characters, though, slips into a pattern early on from which it struggles to escape over the course of the game. At the start you find a keyring containing, apparently, too many keys for you to bother trying to determine which one unlocks which door. So you talk to a ghost and they'll usually ask you to retrieve a personal possession of theirs - often one confiscated by Dr Metcalf. When you return with said possession, they will give you a description of the key that opens one of the doors. Now through the previously locked door, you'll encounter another ghost demanding another item and another description of a key. In all, it makes for a predictable adventure, enlivened (if that's the right word) only by the mood and the pathos of each ghost's awful tale.



Thinking puzzles

Thankfully, however, the puzzles do not descend into levers 'n' gears or sliding block territory. You can carry a hefty inventory of objects and each puzzle will require you to call upon one or two of these in its solution. Mostly they're quite simple as well, often due to the surprisingly heavy dropping of hints given by your and other characters' voice-overs. On occasion, a timed puzzle will rear its head. Unlike other adventures where such puzzles frequently rely upon your reflexes to solve them, here you need only to think quickly. Timed, then, in the sense that you will die if you don't solve the puzzle fast enough.

Ultimately, Blackstone Chronicles possesses much to admire, although it clearly suffers from an underdeveloped structure. Not in the class of Sanitarium, another recent adventure set in a mental institution, but quite good nonetheless.

David Wildgoose

It's all looking a bit 7th Guest, really. The twisted storyline just might save it for some, though

75%

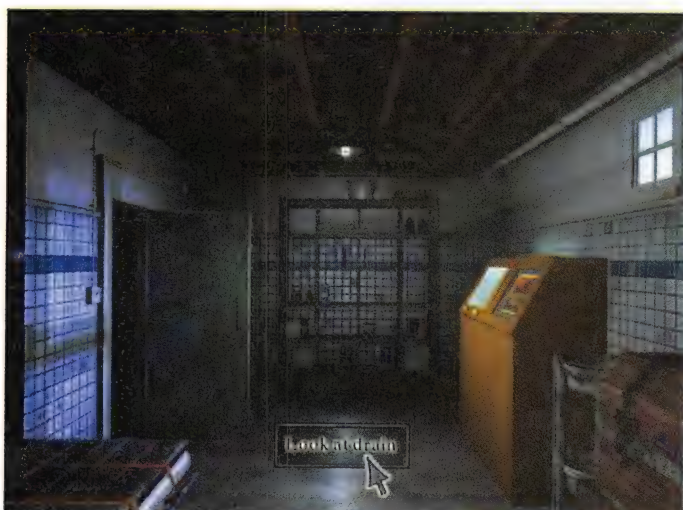
Category Adventure
Players One
Publisher Legend/Red Orb
Price \$79.95
Rating M
Available Now

For Great premise in a fantastically well-researched scenario. One of the most atmospheric adventures in quite a while. It's rare to play a game that has emotional resonances, so kudos for that as well.

Against Poorly and predictably structured with too many neat contrivances. The quality of voice-acting varies erratically.

Need P166, 32MB RAM, 8xCD, 200MB HD

Want P200, 12xCD, 4MB video card



PLUS+

JOHN SAUL
THE OFFICIAL WEB SITE

Check out www.johnsaul.com to learn of the man upon whose novels Blackstone Chronicles is based. Don't worry, though, I'd never heard of him either.

WARBIRDS 2

Whilst not sporting the latest and greatest graphics, Warbirds strengths lie in large scale multiplayer with a wide range of planes available

There's no doubt about it, a games reviewer's life is never dull! I jump out of Fighter Squadron: Screaming Demons Over Europe, where among other things I'm flying B17s and P38s, then in I go to Warbirds 2, where I'm flying exactly the same aircraft! Talk about chalk and cheese; two very different flight sims with Fighter Squadron sporting high quality graphical capabilities, and Warbirds having one of the most distinguished lineages in combat sims, but nonetheless, sporting quite a dated gaming engine in my opinion. Different? Yes, there's a few bugs in Fighter Squadron, but none at all in Warbirds. This makes for interesting comparison work.

Multiseat multiplayer

The comparison is further complicated if you revisit my Fighter Squadron Review, which highlights the game's multiseat capability in offline play, then lambasts Activision for not incorporating this in online play. Well, here we have a conundrum; the B17 in Warbirds 2 does allow you to play any one of seven positions in the aircraft, online and offline! But there's more; it does so for any of the 29 other aircraft carrying more than a pilot. These range from the Ju 87D Stuka, B-25C Mitchell, to the Japanese B5N2 Kate. Not bad at all.



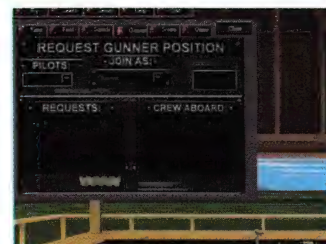
Smoke him a kipper! Major Ian will be back for breakfast. Best of British and all that, old chap!

Getting prettier

At the time of writing I am flying the boxed version of Warbirds 2, and the newest patch updates it to Warbirds 2.5. Looking back on the original Warbirds the biggest changes in the game are in the



graphics department. In fact, it obviously uses the same graphics engine as Dawn of Aces with new 3D rolling terrain, sun that can blind you, and



alternatively hide you from enemy view. Well defined ground and sea objects that move, and a really upgunned user interface that uses mouse clicks instead of typed commands. You can also talk by command line between players as is the norm, or you can use three voice channels that can strike up rudimentary voice communications through your microphone and speakers.

Like Kosovo?

New to the game is 88mm, 20mm and 40mm flak. These supplement the standard .50 calibre anti-aircraft guns and fly up at you, or burst around you, when near an airfield or carrier group, and the addition of haze makes long distance bombing runs much more challenging.





Many play options

For those new to Warbirds, there are three ways to play the game, offline, online and head to head. As with Dawn of Aces, offline is really an area where you hone your skills before taking on a human opponent, but there is much more variety in this mature game! Air Attack is the Instant Action element of the game where you can use any one of the 29 fighters or bombers to take any AI opponent. Bomber Ambush sees a tight bomber formation attacking your airfield, and you've got to stop them. Surface Assault sees you attacking anything on the ground or sea, and Landing on a Dime is landing practice. It might sound silly, but when the torque effects on some of the big single engined fighters kick in, landing does become very difficult.

You can play Head to Head with another player over the internet as long as you know each others' IP addresses, but the real value is in Online play. Here you can join up to 300 others in a virtual world where four sides exist. The goal is to capture enemy airbases by destroying their defences and landing paratroops on their airbases.

Beast not required

As you can see from the images the graphics are better than the original game, but way behind modern flight sims. This has many advantages for those of us that do not have Pentium IIs; you can still play the game! In fact you can run it easily on a P133. But if you are after a serious graphics feast, and cooperative multiplayer action like Falcon 4 or the Novalogic series of games, you will really find it dated.



Breaking bits

Cockpit artwork features neat bitmapped needles, tapes, and levers for a lifelike look. Additional gauges such as artificial horizons, slip indicators, accelerometers, oil pressure gauges, and engine temperature gauges give good feedback to the pilot. The flight models for each aircraft do vary, and now in Warbirds 2 with Force Feedback enabled, it is a mighty effort to put a B17 into a sharp turn. Real world handling characteristics and realistic spins induce over-stress on the airframe, and the damage model sees flaps, landing gear, parts of wing etc break apart on weapon impact or excessive speeds.

No big booms

The movement of gun turrets is also very slick in multi-seat aircraft, but the sound that supports the .50 cal's firing is not the thumping impact experienced in Fighter Squadron, nor is the piddly little trickle of tracer anything to write home to Mum about.

Maj Ian Lindgren



Dogfighting has never been quite so intense... Erm... Well, the sky's a big place you know!

81%

Category Combat Flight sim
Players 1- lots via Internet (TCP/IP)
Publisher Interactive Magic
Price \$39.95
Rating G
Available Now

For Warbirds 2 has probably got the largest flight sim following in the world, so if you like what you see, it should appeal to you at \$39.95. Can be played with P133 PCs

Against Once again I say that the gaming engine is dated...nuff said!

Need P133 with 32 MB RAM

Want P200 with 32 MB RAM

3D SUPPORT
D3D and 3dfx

PLUS+



Probably the main Australian Warbirds Squadron is 75 Squadron RAAF at <http://www.ozemail.com.au/~peril/wbraaf/>. These guys get very busy on Wednesday and Sunday evenings. If you go to the base of the left menu you can take a world tour of Warbirds action and information.

RESIDENT EVIL 2

A dark, frightening and affecting mood pervades this excellent action/adventure game. And it's a console port too. Go figure!

Effectively evoking a sense of sheer terror has always managed to elude game developers over the years. From early text adventures dripping with menacing prose to the visually lavish, pseudo-cinematic experiences of today, the all-important immersion factor has never quite been there. An awareness that, as the player, you were sitting in front of a computer watching some animated pixels on screen has remained overwhelmingly compelling. Perhaps the most successful horror-themed games, at least in terms of tension and atmosphere, were the *Alone In The Dark* series. While, elsewhere, first-person games, particularly action titles like *Descent* or *Thief*, have consistently contrived to give the player their share of frightening moments. The popularity of Capcom's *Resident Evil* has been undeniable, but how successful is it at scaring you witless?

Bring on the gore

Well, to start with, it's worth noting that *Resident Evil 2*, like its predecessor, both looks and plays like *Alone In The Dark* to a remarkable extent. Survivors of Infogrames' Lovecraftian classic will feel very much at home, perhaps even a little too comfortable at times. You will quickly recog-



nise many of the elements of this new game as reprisals - gori-er, bloodier and ultimately more explicit, but reprisals nonetheless. The camerawork and pacing of the action are more or less identical. Low angle shots abound, interspersed with three-quarter views that show too much and too little at the same time, hinting only at the possibility of what might be lurking in the shadows beyond that bookshelf or behind that stairwell.

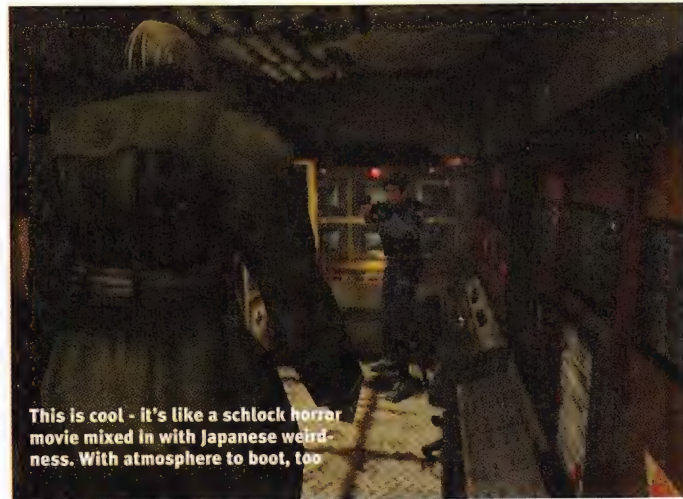
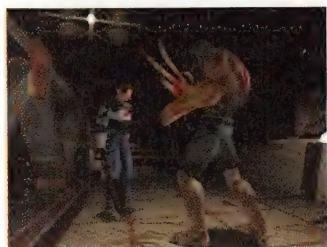
Spinal shivers

Horror films become predictable after you've seen several and begin to anticipate the recurring tricks and techniques. Yet, of course, that same anticipation is the very reason why we love horror in all its guises. Tension accumulates through suggestion and intimidation - the subtle, half-seen movement in the shadows; the door stood slightly ajar; the still body on the floor tempting you to approach it. The fear is generated through not knowing when the expected climax will finally materi-



alise, thus the actual event itself - the sudden emergence from the shadows; the revelation of the monster's grotesque form; that still body rising to its feet when you get too close - appears secondary and,

after the initial fright, often anticlimactic. Expect the unexpected. It's a formula that works despite itself and, yes, continues to send those shivers up your spine throughout *Resident Evil 2*.



This is cool - it's like a schlock horror movie mixed in with Japanese weirdness. With atmosphere to boot, too





Raccoon City? Uh?

Set in the isolated American town of Raccoon City, the scenario describes the covert exploits of the Umbrella Corporation in some dubious field of genetic research. When the main characters, Leon (a rookie police officer) and Claire (sister of previous Resident Evil hero, Chris Redfield), arrive on the scene, they find a once bustling town now overrun with zombies and worse. The opening cutscene is just incredible, exceptionally realised with a style and eye for detail all too rare for a game. At the end of which, Leon and Claire are left stranded on either side of a wrecked semi-trailer and surrounded by the moaning undead. Here is where the game's cleverest conceit is revealed. Choose either character the first time - the game comes on two CDs, a convenient one for each - and you'll play through the game from their point of view. Once completed, you can insert the other CD and then play again, only this time it's from the other character's perspective. What actions you

took with Leon the first time round will affect how you experience the same situations while playing as Claire. The duo's individual stories regularly intersect not only with each other, but also with those of the several other characters you'll meet during various later stages. Essentially, this is a brilliant piece of game design and you can only admire the breathtaking fashion with which Capcom managed to carry it off.

Low grade puzzles

Less original is the gameplay that, as mentioned earlier, borrows rather heavily from a certain other game. It's a flick screen affair that has you exploring the Raccoon City police station and environs, gunning down hideous creatures (mostly zombies, though) and solving puzzles in order to progress further. Compared to that other game, the puzzles are pretty mundane. Searching for yet another key can become tiresome, though there are some flashes of inspiration (negotiating the burning helicopter is particularly inventive) to keep the mind occupied. On the other hand, blowing chunks off zombies is terrific fun, partly due to



the nice range of weapons to be found, but mostly because of the satisfyingly gruesome ways in which they die. Great care has obviously been paid in keeping the number of enemies to a minimum, for too many would have ruined the atmosphere and diminished the game's impact and shock value.

Almost perfect

Resident Evil 2 is close to the perfect action/adventure. Honing a fine balance between carnage and clues, Capcom have devised an immensely entertaining game - although one that probably still isn't quite scary enough. Play it at night, with the lights off and the sound loud, and enjoy.

David Wildgoose

Stylistically, this is a cut above - many of the scenes and shots are of movie quality

88%

Category Action/Adventure
Players 1
Publisher Capcom
Price \$TBA
Rating M15+
Available TBA

For Brilliantly creepy atmosphere. Dazzling visuals and eerie sound effects set a sinister mood that keep you on the edge of your seat. Simple controls and highly effective camera views make for an accessible and playable game. An inspired two games in one.

Against Dodgy voice-acting will disgruntle some, as will the console-esque save points - though it's certainly not the worst offender in this area.

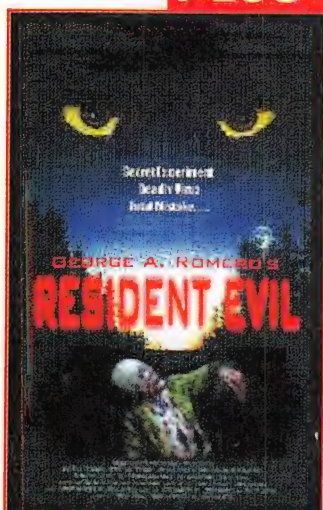
Need P166, 24Mb RAM, 4xCD

Want P200, 32Mb RAM, 8xCD, 3D card

3D SUPPORT

All major cards supported

PLUS+



Here's an early poster for the upcoming Resident Evil movie. Directed by the great George Romero, it ought to be a schlock horror classic!



IMPERIALISM 2

Although not quite up to the same standard as the big name games in the TBS genre, Imperialism is still by no means a bad game

Recent months have borne witness to an impressive collection of revitalised turn-based strategy games. The latest iterations of the Heroes Of Might & Magic and Civilization templates - in the shape of Heroes 3 and both Alpha Centauri and Call To Power - have been met with great enthusiasm by fans of genre. As a Civ clone, albeit on a smaller scale, Imperialism was reasonably received this time last year. In the hope of garnering significantly more attention for the sequel, Imperialism 2 curiously bears an alarming similarity to the venerable, minor classic of empire-building, Colonization.

All roads lead to...

You play the leader - despot or ruthless, you decide - of a Great Power of the Old World. Spain, England, Portugal, Sweden, Holland or France are the only choices, although the likes of Germany, Denmark and others feature as minor powers. Beginning with your capital city, you must first commence development of the home provinces before sailing forth to contact - that is, to brutally slaughter with either guns or trade - the natives of the New World. Quite why it's necessary to build sawmills, mines, grain and livestock farms, and even roads in these presumably already well-developed countries is a mite perplexing. Not to mention more than somewhat odd, considering the lengths SSI

have gone to elsewhere in order to achieve realism and historical accuracy. Never mind, just mark it down as a game balance issue.

Utilising natives

The early stages of the game should be spent establishing a solid foundation for your economy. Trade plays a vital role here. From the Trade screen you can easily set the raw materials or finished goods you wish to buy or have for sale (and the number you're prepared to part with), and at the beginning of each turn the transactions will take place. Once you've discovered



You're right, Europe doesn't look like that. Imperialism 2 only has random maps, you see. What's more, units can magically skip around the maps with little indication of time and travel

the New World you can deal with the natives and the additional resources they produce (like cotton, spices, and sugar), as well as the Old World nations.

Diplomatic relations are an area in which Imperialism 2 excels. Treaties are signed, detailing trade agreements and alliances, and there are, of course, aggressive and economic means of assuming control of other empires. Grants and various trade subsidies can also be proffered to swing favour.

Rudimentary graphics

Functional is the only term to describe the graphics. The terrain tiles merely indicate what type of resource can



be extracted from that particular square of land. For example, that yellow farmland you can see in the pictures isn't actually a farm, but a reminder that grain can be harvested there. Likewise, the mountains are just there to mine for ore, copper, and other minerals, rather than providing any hindrance as your units move through them or acting as a part of your defensive strategy. When launching an attack on another province, all you need is to park a ship in its territory and you then somehow ferry troops there from any of your towns. Though the number of troops you can move depends on the capacity of the ship, it still feels like a strange way of issuing orders.





Cute icons go some way to prettifying the bland spreadsheet look.



ny of micro-management, but there's an inescapable sense that something is missing.

Control and conquer

For these and other reasons, playing Imperialism 2 can feel like a very detached experience. Production and development is initiated at a macro level. You recruit and employ workers for your entire empire, instead of the usual town by town basis. I found this made it occasionally difficult to get my head around what was actually happening - where resources were being produced, how many, and what I needed next. I presume this has been done to reduce the monoto-



One moment your explorer is checking the hills near your home city for any hint of mineral deposits; the very next he could find himself scouting the strange, harsh New World. It's all quite odd and, for me at least, does little to engender any kind of emotional attachment to the proceedings.

Historical knowledge

In its favour, the real world historical setting does allow for a degree of all-important familiarity with the subject matter. This is a crucial factor when it comes to research. Here, when presented with research options such as Road Construction, Tobacco Planting or Organised Regiments, you can at the very least make an educated guess as to the benefits of such technologies and to which future technologies they might lead. By comparison, stumbling through Alpha Centauri's tech tree of Superstring Theory and Quantum Physics or whatever, an excessive amount of time will surely be spent scratching your head or burying it deep inside the manual. In this area, Imperialism 2 has the advantage of accessibility.

'Tis a bit dull

Overall, this is a good, solid strategy title. Many of the screens give a damn good impersonation of spreadsheets and, as such, the whole thing can be - dare I say it - dull at times. But the empire-building, resource-management nature of the game is addictive and rewarding.

David Wildgoose



PLUS+



<http://www.imperialism2.com/html/overview.html>

72%

Category Strategy (turn)
Players 1-Multi
PublisherSSI
Price\$TBA
RatingG
AvailableNow

For Solidly playable strategy fare. Very good trade and diplomatic functions. Would make for a fine multiplayer game as well.

Against Basic graphics and a lack of personality can make for a dull, lifeless time. The abstract gameplay mechanics put an unhealthy distance between the player and the gameworld.

Need P100, 16Mb RAM, 4xCD

Want P133, 8xCD

NORTH VS. SOUTH

Oh dear god, it's another turn based Civil War sim - not that there's anything wrong with that, of course. Pity about the interface

You might hear the title North vs. South and think that this was a game of great historical importance. A game that's representative of the struggles of a nation. You might think that it could show the true meaning of strength and intelligence on the battlefield. Yes! A State of Origin game! To your dismay you'll soon learn that it's only another American Civil War title, that has bugger-all to do with Australian gamers and probably most American gamers as well. Who was Ulysses S. Grant? Stan's brother? No. He was a big war-type in the Civil War for the South... or was it the North? Ah, who really gives a damn...

Slaver or idealist?

As either the Unionists (the

North) or the Confederates (the South), you can take part in ten campaigns of the American Civil War, including Bull Run, Cedar Creek, Gaines Mill and, of course, Gettysburg. On the battlefield you'll control infantry, cavalry, artillery, supplies and leaders, in your attempts to vanquish your chosen enemy. An interesting feature is that the field is not a grid of isometric squares, but hexagons. It's been done before but it does create a much more realistic battlefield than some other strategy titles.

Moral morale

There is quite a bit of depth in the game. Your troops are governed by morale points that are affected by your command, as well as action in battle. If a battalion is overwhelmed, it will

retreat in spite of your wishes. You are able to limber or unlimber your artillery for quicker transportation. There seems to have been considerable attention given to the game's design concept, which only increases the disappointment of the end product.

War is a nightmare

The game looks fairly promising but the execution is less than perfect. Take the interface - please! It is most confusing and illogical. You cannot directly select a unit that you wish to control, you must first find its leader. This isn't a problem if you have all your forces nicely arranged but who said war was pretty? Once you have control of a unit or group of units, it's then a nightmare trying to get them to do what you want. Just say you want them to face a certain direction i.e. the enemy. They may just decide that no, they'd rather be shot in the back, thank you so much. The bottom line is that there is obviously much detail in the game but poor control means it doesn't emerge well in play. More often, North vs. South just seems confused and troublesome. I want to battle some Confederate moustache not the interface.

It's no Gettysburg

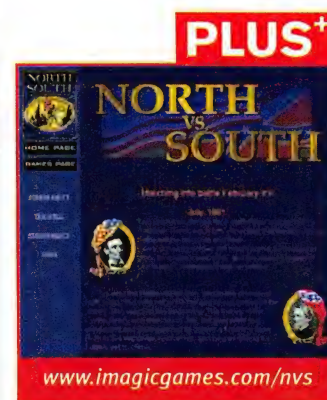
The music is fairly thin and repetitious. There's tin whistle versions of 'John Brown's Body' and other chirpy numbers that fall into the "second verse, same as the first" variety. After about ten minutes you'll turn the sound off with a vengeance. The mood that the game goes for misses by a long shot. A far cry from the Ken Burns reserved, soul-stirring documentary feel, it just comes off seeming hollow.

North vs. South is an example of a game that is half finished. It has some great potential that was never realised and there are better examples of this type of game i.e. Sid Meier's Gettysburg. By no means is it terrible but at the same time it's not all that could have been.

John Dewhurst



Hex grid American Civil War games are sure to be a hit with Australian gamers... unless they mean the Bears versus the Rabbitohs



PLUS+	
67%	
Category	Turn-based Strategy
Players	1- 2 (TCP/IP, LAN, modem play)
Publisher	Interactive Magic
Price	\$TBA
Rating	PG
Available	Now
For	Fairly competent gameplay, offers ten campaigns from the American Civil War
Against	Confusing interface, poor control, intolerable music, potential that wasn't realised.
Need	P166, 16MB RAM, Win95, SVGA card, 4x CD-ROM
Want	P200, 32MB RAM, sound card (maybe not...)



GRUNTZ

Lemmings meets Warcraft in this odd puzzler from Monolith

Gruntz seems largely inspired by someone's perverted fixation with the nuggety peons from the game Warcraft 2, from the Orc forces. They were rotund, endearingly stupid little buggers that lugged around sacks of gold and chopped trees down. They were highly enthusiastic about their work, in fact dementedly so. The characters in Gruntz are almost exactly the same, except their capabilities have been fully explored, allowing them to wield particular tools, a range of weapons and squeaky toys. The squeaky toys are actually the highest form of military diversion tactics: throwing one to a heavily armed enemy grunt results in their complete fixation for several minutes, while your army casually strolls past.

Mystic rocks

It's not all combat tactics though, unlike the hallowed Warcraft. It's mostly a puzzle game of fairly simple dimensions, based on the idea of finding a mystic rock somewhere in the level and then carrying it to an altar. To get through the puzzles you have to use the Gruntz in an intelligent fashion, in terms of tool selection and doing things in the prescribed order, with the right Grunt, to succeed.

Bunch of tools

Along the way you have to take out or avoid enemy Gruntz using a range of wacky equipment, however the combat side of things is very secondary to the main game. It works in the classic 'isometric' (top-down) model of RTS games, and exactly like Warcraft, but it's on such a small scale, i.e. only three or four characters involved, it's very simple to control. In particular you have to think about the tools your Gruntz have discovered and their various properties, as each Grunt can only hold one tool at a time. There are a few obtuse tools like the giant milkshake straw, which can be used to suck up the splattered gooey remains of slain enemies. After you've hoovered up five or



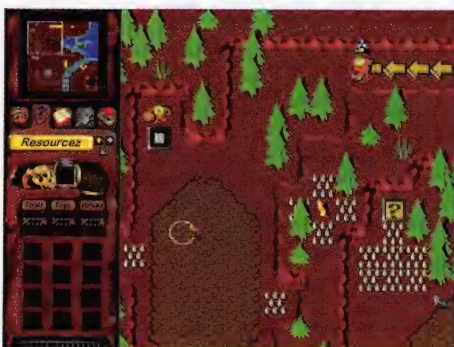
so foes you can then generate a new Grunt for your team. The straw can also be used as a weak combat weapon, likewise the shovel, which can also dig and fill in holes (duh). You can even build little brick barricades with the mortar and trowel tool, which can be knocked down with the gauntlets tool.

This is ponderous

Otherwise it's a case of pressing switches, toggling or standing on them in combination to open another gate thing or raise another bridge, upon which your Grunt can then go flick a new switch that raises a totally new, permanent bridge, and so on ad nauseam. It's not difficult, and neither is it helped by it's painfully slow pace, which is really torturous. Even when you can see exactly what you need to do it's still very ponderous to carry it out.

Teeny challenge

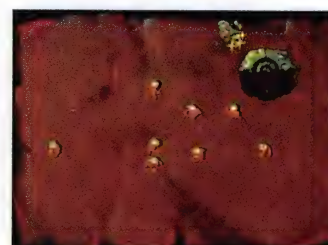
It's a well-planned idea for a puzzle game, and the combat bits bring a bit of excitement to the cerebral boredom, but it's way too easy to challenge even an extremely average strategy gamer, and absolutely laughable to hardened



puzzle gamers. It would be great for kids in their early teens or younger, and in all fairness, this is probably where Monolith were marketing it. Perhaps we assumed too much considering their track record, the ultra-violent Blood2 and Shogo-MAD. Sorry, silly us!

Basically, the whole thing's a wet dream from the newsgroup: alt.sex.warcraft2.baby.orcs.with.clubs. Amusing for the kiddies, but otherwise you're wasting your time. Unless you like easy cutesy games built for those of damaged intellect.

Ed Dawson



At last, Peon fetishists can have their cravings satisfied with Gruntz

PLUS+



<http://www.gruntzgoo.com>

45%

Category Cutesy puzzle game
Players 1-4 (IPX, TCP/IP, Modem)
Publisher GT Interactive
Price \$TBA
Rating G
Available Now

For Nice animation, well-designed overall.

Against Annoying voice samples, waaay too easy, waaay too slow, blatant ripoff of Warcraft2 characters.

Need P133, 32 Mb RAM, Win9x, 100Mb disk space, 2Mb video card, 4xCD

Want P166, 8xCD

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MAGIX MUSIC SYSTEMS

Get jiggy wid your PC

Once in a while, even the most hardcore gamer must leave the house. Sure, it may just be to go to the store to buy some munchies and Visine (you know, from staring at the screen until 3am with poor lighting). Some may even go so far out as to the video store. But maybe, even just once a year, they may venture further. Maybe on their birthday, or to see that special someone they met over the net. And maybe, just maybe they'll venture out to some happening club. After a few drinks and some 'fun' they decide, "hey this music stuff ain't too bad, but hell, I could write something better than this". They start dreaming that they could become the next hero DJ, spinning that vinyl and programming them block-rocking beats. Hell, they're already

half way there, they own a PC don't they?

"Hey man, I just had this mad idea for a track"

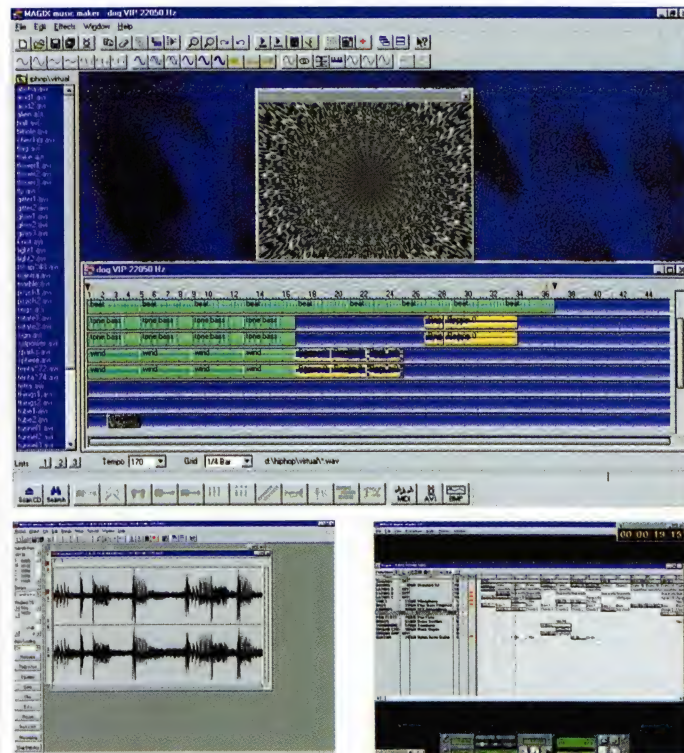
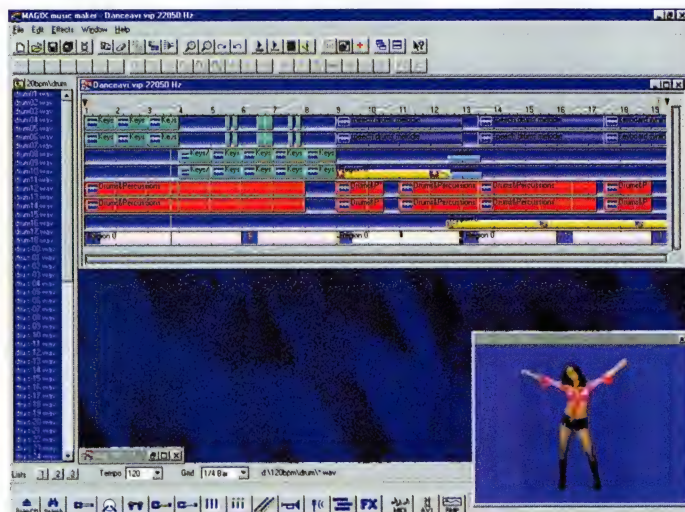
"You what?"

"Man it's gonna be fresh."

"That's great hun, but where did 'mad' and 'fresh' come from, are you drinking tequila again?"

"All I need is a mackin' program and I'll start stackin' chips, touring the world, hittin' skins, and hypnotising hoez with my def scratching and flexing my skeelz on the wheelz of steel, boyee. Move over Mix Master Mike, here comes Bitch Slappin' Billy!"

The next day they wake to a headache and no memory of the night before, they then discover a fine hoochie mama asleep naked next to them in bed, the person stirs, "you were great Bitch Slappin' Billy". The previous



All these weird shapes and lines actually mean something - beneath the interface lies a powerful music program

night comes back to them, and in a flash they're in their robe, hooking up to the net. They start an intense search for composition programs, only to discover that they all range in price from \$2000-\$6000. Not to mention the need for mixers and decks.

"Now how am I supposed to get in with the opposite sex, I have no social skills!"

Never fear, Magix Music is here, with Magix Music Maker, Magix Audio Studio, and Magix Midi Studio. Basically it is a true value for money program system that not only lets you create your own sound, but you can also make your own clip to go with it. Each program is uniquely different, so no matter your prior music skills, you can make something that sounds good.

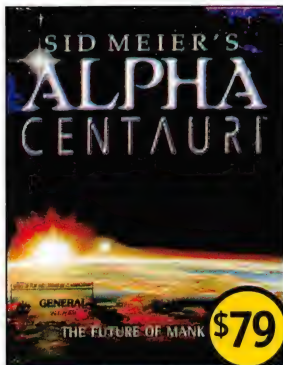
Magix Music Maker is great for beginners and wannabe DJ's alike, with a friendly interface of 4-16 tracks which are easily laid out point and click style with samples. The samples are of course wav files, so record your own, or choose from the many

sample disc's available. These range from Jungle/hip hop to rock/pop, to house and techno. There's even a disc of samples from international DJ Dimitri Amsterdam available. For those inclined, the video editor will guarantee hours spent looking at the pretty 3D graphics with an inane smile and wide eyes. Yes, there's plenty of tripped out sequences to choose from.

The Magix Audio and Midi Studio's are a little more for the previously experienced musician, there's a mixing table, keyboard, and even a metronome. Anything created can be notated and printed out so you too can have that "I've just had my music published" thrill. All you need is a decent sound card and you're set to rock. With the main programs retailing around \$120-\$130, and each sample disc around \$30, it is definitely a viable alternative to Cuebass V.S.T. (an excellent professional programs in the \$1000+ category) Especially if music is just a hobby.

Agata Budinska

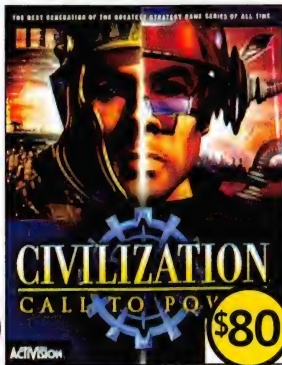
LATEST GAME SPECIALS



Alpha Centauri



Aust. Cricket Captain



Civilisation Call to Power



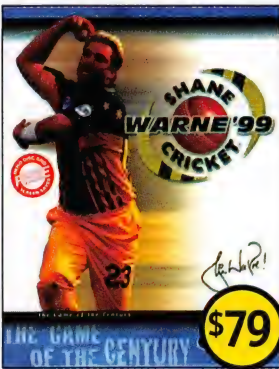
Heroes of M&M III



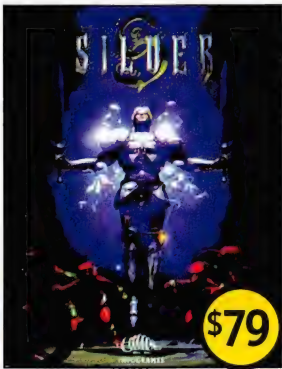
Requiem



Rollercoaster Tycoon



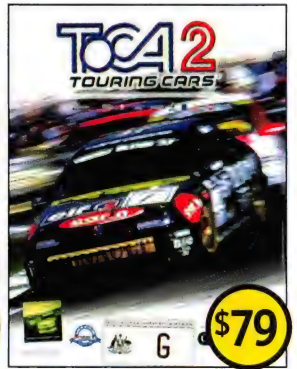
Shane Warne Cricket



Silver



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House Of The Dead

[?] My name is God and I've finished House Of The Dead and want to know if there are any codes to get different guns besides the pistol.

God of gaming
S.A.

[*] Well Mr. God, seeing as you're God you should know the answer already. P.S. What are next week's Lotto numbers?

Nightmare Creatures

[?] In Nightmare Creatures I'm stuck on level 3. How do you get through this level without being fried by the dragon things?

Aidan Bartlett
Auckland, New Zealand.

[*] Here's what you need to do: to kill the creature you have to destroy the wooden pillars surrounding it. This can be accomplished by a single well-aimed blow with your weapon. Every time you knock a pillar over, the monster will be stunned. The trick is to try and continuously drop pillars, when you've knocked them all down, it gets crushed.

The Feeble Files

[?] I can normally finish games without any problems at all, but there's one that I just can't finish and it's reducing me to a nervous wreck. The game is The Feeble Files and I'm stuck in the prison. I can't distract the warden. What do I do?

Shane Roche

[*] No problem Shane, here's what you need to do. At the beginning of the level you will find yourself being hypnotised every few minutes and transported somewhere else. There's little you can do about this so just go with it. The important room is the recreation room. Once there pick up the poster and get the tacks which hold it to the wall. Eventually, you will wind up in your cell, now act quickly. Open the sanitation unit and combine the tacks with the bed - when you next get hypnotized you will wake up because of the tacks, pick them up and continue to lay on the bed. As soon as the warden comes in and has gone past you, get up and leave.

Zork Nemesis

[?] I'm stuck in Zork Nemesis and am wondering where all the metals are kept. I have all the elements and have explored everywhere that I can. Also, how do you unlock the gate at the beginning of the game?

Corey Pierce
Geraldton, W.A.

[*] Hmmm, the metals, I assume you're referring to the alchemy lab. Here's what you need to do there. In the Alchemy



lab, take the key and lump of metal from the table. Put the metal into the spinning egg and place the key in the key slot (on the panel in the wall). Crack the key and spin the spinner. Now, open the spinner and take the metal ball then walk across the lab and put the ball in the chemical bath. Lower the basket and take out a shiny new ball. Return back to the other side of the lab and turn on the lava pipe. Now go to the flame machine and set the flames to the colours you saw on the banner above Malveux's bed (blue, yellow, red, orange, white.) Put the ball in the lion's mouth, then look down and pump the bellows to cool the metal. Now touch the element. To get into the double doors at the beginning of the game just examine the knocker on the left door and rotate the crescent moon upward so that it covers the sun.

Final Fantasy 7

[?] I'm stuck in Final Fantasy 7. How do you get through the mansion at the top of the market, I try to get in but the boss only likes women. Also, how do you get out of the sector 7 slums?

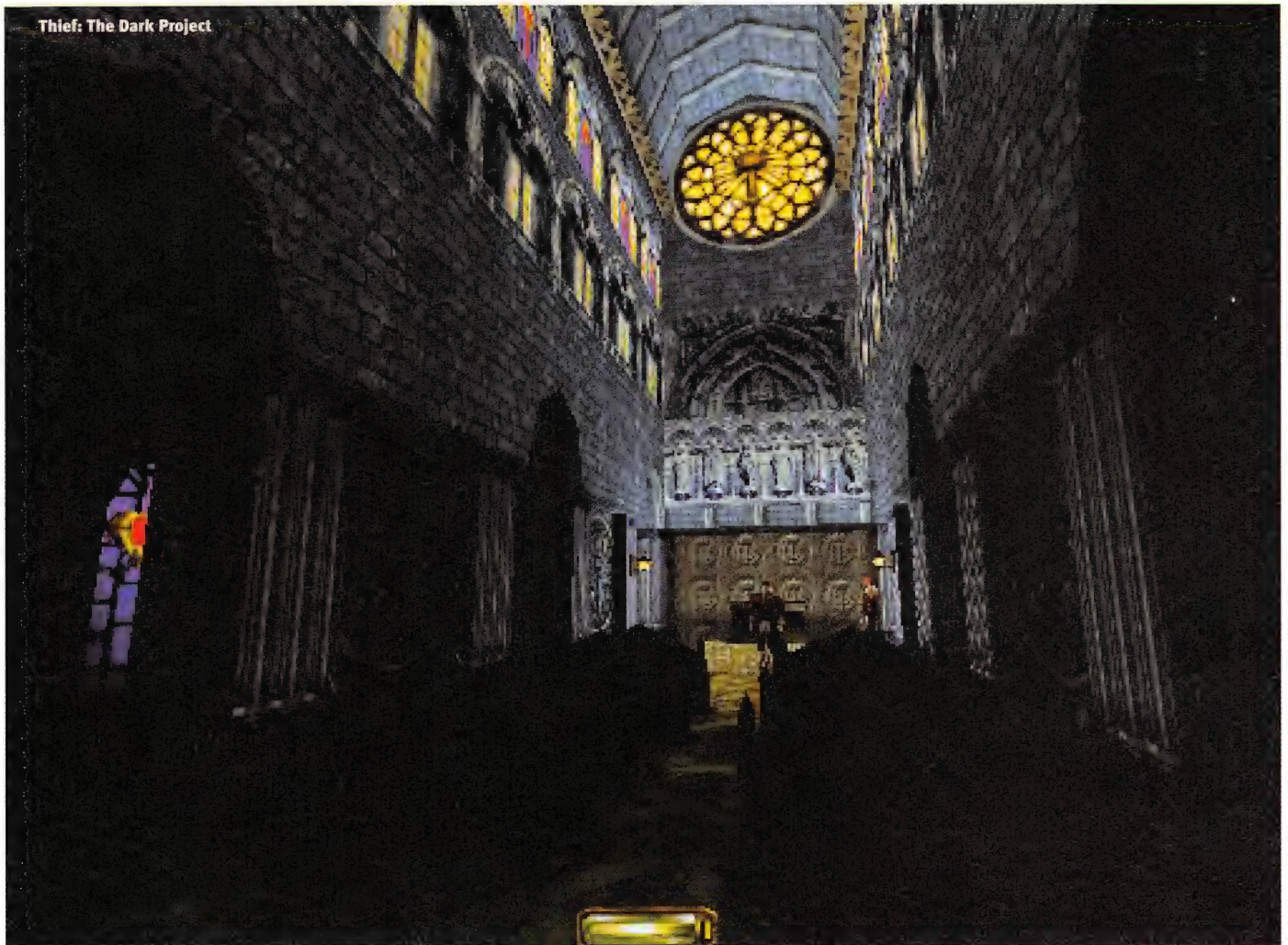
Zac
Croydon, Victoria

[*] Ah, Final Fantasy 7 - a truly brilliant game. Firstly you've a fair ways to getting out of Sector 7, so you'll just have to keep trying. As for getting Tifa back, here's what you need to do. Basically you need to dress up as a woman to get inside. Start by going to the brothel and talking to the big guy with silver hair who's chatting with the bouncer at the door. Pick the first option to inquire about Tifa. Now, go back to the building at the end of town and talk to the guy near the door. Return to the first screen, go to the clothing store, and talk to the store owner by standing near the bottom edge of the counter.

Next go to the bar in the second screen and talk to the lone man by the door. You'll have to make two decisions. After you're done talking to the man, return to the clothing store. At the store, you'll see that the man from the inn is now behind the



Thief: The Dark Project



counter. Talk to him and you'll receive an item based upon your decisions. You're not done yet. Now leave the clothing store, enter the gym and converse with the woman by the fighting ring. When you have the chance, pick the bottom option twice. Basically you have to do more squats in order to get a wig (those crazy Japanese!). Upon receiving the wig, return to the clothing shop and enter the stall. You will now be dressed up as a woman and can enter the brothel.

Grim Fandango

I need help with Grim Fandango. I'm in the forest and have retrieved Glottis' heart, taken the pump/high lift shockers, accessed the secret ramp with the crazy sign, and taken the 'devil key'. My question is, how do you get past the devil beavers.

Steve.

Internet

***** Devil Beavers, you have to love modern adventures don't you? Ok Steve, here's what you need to do. Start by going through the door in the middle of the dam and use the fire extinguisher on the beaver. Which won't work. You need to move to the little path to the left of the dam and hide under the big rock.

Now the devil beaver can smell, but not see you. Throw a bone from the web towards the river and again spray the beaver with the fire extinguisher. All done, now you can escape the forest.

Thief: The Dark Project

I'm stuck in the Undercover level of Thief the Dark Project. I have to throw a switch "behind the Keystone Tree"... and I'm hoping you know what it is and where!

Cameron Picton

Internet

***** Basically you need to flip 5 switches, here's how to get the first one, then you're on your own again. A number of Hammer guards are in the area, so be careful to make sure you aren't spotted. From the bottom of the staircase, make a right followed by another right and walk down the hallway. When it's clear, duck into the first door on the right, it's one of the rooms with an inverted red hammer.

Inside is an angry priest who is tough to kill so instead, knock him out with a gas arrow and close the door behind you. Explore the room, and grab the key on the back table and the hammer on the small shrine. Exit to the hallway, go left and run up the staircase to the top floor.

Return to the Reliquary, and this time, go out the door near the artifacts. Continue going through the doors ahead of you until you reach a locked door. The key you stole from the priest's room is a master key and will open everything in the entire temple.

After reading the scroll, exit the room and go back down the large staircase. Return to the hallway

outside the priest's room and continue all the way to the end of the hall. Take the first corridor to the left and take the staircase all the way down to the storage room.

Now sit and wait. A guard is patrolling the hallway outside this room, walking counterclockwise. Wait for him to pass, then walk out into the hall. Follow him from a safe distance and keep going around the corners behind him. Eventually, you'll see a door on your left leading into the central area of this hall. When the guard turns the next corner, open the door with the key and go in, closing it behind you.

This is the old kitchen, which is currently being converted into a treasure room. Open the three chests and get all the coins from the floor. Look around the broken wall and hit the switch on the back wall. That's switch one, 4 more to go.



TIPS & TACTICS

Very, very small playguides

Starfleet Academy

★ System Targeting. A basic strategy for fighting all vessels is to first, acquire the target and determine if the vessel can cloak. If it can, lock phasers onto the cloaking device immediately (hot key sequence: V and then 8). And destroy it.

★ Once you've destroyed the cloaking device, or the ship doesn't have one, take out the impulse drive (hot key sequence: V and then 3). Essentially, disable the ships first before going for the kill.

★ Another strategy for taking out ships is to use your tractor beam. Approach a cloaking-capable ship straight-on and firing and when he tries to cloak, lock a tractor beam on him. Once locked, you can fire upon him mercilessly whether he is cloaked or not.

Sim City 3000

★ Start by building your city near a fresh water supply. Lay down a large residential area, then an Industrial Area that's close but not too close to keep pollution down. Next build a Commercial area near the Residential Area and run roads through and around the areas. Lay down a Power Plant and connect it to the areas with the power lines.

★ Always remember to connect new areas with water pipes so that everyone has water or your Sims will complain.



★ At the beginning of the game set Industrial and Commercial Taxes at 8 or 9%, and have Residential Taxes between 7 to 10 %.

★ Build a road connections to a neighbouring city. This will allow you to sell excess power or water, remove garbage or make money taking the neighbours garbage.

★ When starting off you can cut down funding to the Police and Fire department until the city develops.



through the stage. When the Dean tells you to "sit down" click on the light coming out of the wall to do hand shadows. Do this a couple of times then talk to Kimberly until she gives you the paper. Click on Beavis or Butt-Head with the paper then click on the Dean and you will be free.

Dark Side Of The Moon

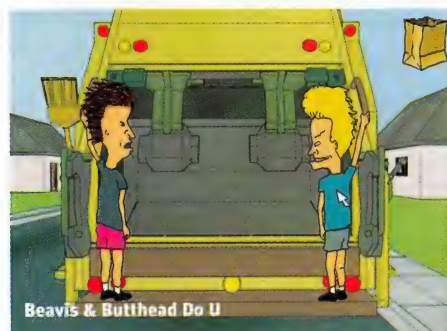
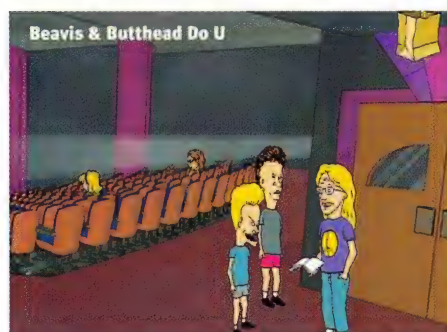
★ To get into the Ore processing Centre make sure you talk to Oliver Whistler when leaving the claims office. He will give you a pass to the Ore Processing centre.

★ The Blackjack room serves 2 purposes. To talk with Kit and get as much information as possible and to increase your bank balance.

★ When you first start playing you will win every hand up to \$600. So to make \$1200 when you hit \$600 double up to make \$1200. After this occurs Hunter will come out and make sure winning is more difficult.

Beavis & Butt-Head Do U

★ To escape from the Dean, click on him to ask question then try to exit



Forbidden City

★ To solve the Go puzzle, you have to draw the "Middle" symbol in Chinese as show in the "Clue for the Second Confession". Essentially you need to click onto a dark yellow button to highlight it (or "activate" it) and on the other ones to draw the "Middle". Here is what you have to do (the "o" is the button to "activate" by clicking on it-)

```

* * o * *
* o o o *
* o o o *
* * o * *
* * o * *

```


CODE

Oh, don't bother trying to justify it. Just cheat. It's easier that way.

Sim City 3000

To activate cheat mode, press the Control, Shift, Alt and 'C' keys at the same time. Then, in the window type in the below cheat codes to activate them

i am weak Makes most things free (buildings, zoning, utilities, transportation, etc)

call cousin Vinnie This will give you an extra petitioner, who offers you cash 'no questions asked'.

zyxwvu First you'll have to activate the Vinny cheat above, then refuse his offer to prove your integrity. Then activate this cheat, and a Castle will become available in the Rewards menu. It looks pretty, and also increases nearby land value and aura.

garbage in, garbage out makes garbage buildings available whenever you want

power to the masses Makes all power buildings available at any time

water in the desert makes all water buildings available at any time

Alpha Centauri

While playing the game press Control - K to bring up the map editor. Then enter the following codes

Change year Shift - F5

Create unit Shift - F1

Discover technology Shift - F2

Edit energy credits Shift - F4

Edit faction diplomacy Shift - F9

Full map Y

Kill opponent Shift - F6

Switch sides Shift - F3

View FMV Shift - F8

View replay Shift - F7

Baldurs Gate

Using a text editor, edit the 'Baldur.ini' file in the games root directory. Add the line "Cheats = 1" under the "[Game Options]" section. Start the game, the press Control + Tab to bring up the console window. Enter the codes below, then press enter, and then Control + Tab once again to close the window.

Cheats:CriticalItems(); Get main quest items

Cheats:DriztDefends(); Friendly Drizt appears

Cheats:DriztAttacks(); Hostile Drizt appears

Cheats:TheGreatGonzo(); get ten friendly bezerk



chickens

Cheats:CowKill(); Summon Cow scroll in inventory

Cheats:ExploreArea(); Reveal map

Cheats:FirstAid(); Add scroll of stone to flesh, 5 potions of healing, 5 antidotes to inventory

Cheats:Hans(); teleport to open location

Cheats:Midas(); Get 500 gold

Colin McRae Rally

Enter the following codes at the name edit screen

TROLLEY Toggles four wheel steering

FORKLIFT Toggles rear wheel steering

HELUIMNICK copilot talk like Mickey Mouse

MOREOOMPH Toggles turbo mode

BLANCMANGE Toggles rubber car mode

BACKSEAT Makes copilot Nicki Grist

PEASOUPER Toggles excessive fog

OPENROADS enables all tracks

SHOEBOXES enables all cars

Kings Quest 8

During the game press Left Control, Left Shift, and the 7 keys to access the console. Thpe in the codes, then press Left Control, Left Shift and the 7 key once again to exit the console.

god Enable God mode

ungod disable God mode

bump disable collion detection (no clipping)

concollide disable no clipping mode

teleport teleport anywhere on map

set kqconner::reincarnate true instant return from death

give <item> <number> Gives items. Main items include;

silvercoins

Starcraft: Brood War

To activate, press enter, then type in the codes, then enter again

operation cwal - Building is faster and upgrades are instant

the gathering - unlimited psionic ability

power overwhelming - indestructible buildings and ships

food for thought - no supply limit on building units

black sheep wall - full map available

noglues - opponents have no psionics

modify the phase variance - build anything

medieval man - free upgrades

there is no cow level - mission skip

ophelia - enable mission selection

terran<mission number> - Terran mission select

zerg<mission number> - Zerg mission select

protoss<mission number> - Protoss mission select

staying alive - continue once mission complete

Man over game - win game

game over man - lose game

radio free zerg - Zerg song (must be playing as Zerg)

show me the money - 10,000 gas and minerals

whats mine is mine - increase mineral by 500

breathe deep - increase gas by 500

something for nothing - increases everything

war aint what it used to be - remove fog of war

mushrooms

crystals

sacredwater

elixiroflife

invulnerable

strength

clarity

invisible

For example, entering; **give silvercoins 100** would give you 100 silver coins

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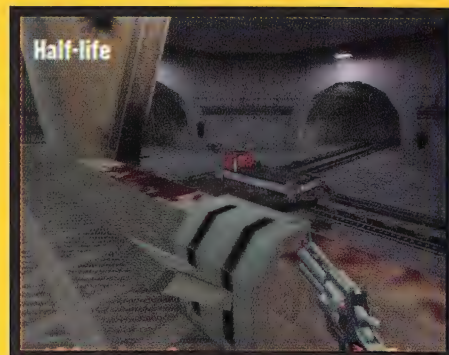
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101	Missions 5-10
102	Missions 11-17
103	Missions 18-20 plus tips & Survival tips

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110	We've got hostiles
111	Power Up, On the Rails (Part 1)
112	On the Rails (Part 2), Apprehension, Residue Processing
113	Questionable ethics, Surface Tension (Part 1)
114	Surface Tension (Part 2), Forget about the Freeman, Lambda Core, Xen, Gonarr's Lair
115	Interloper, Nihilanth and weapon descriptions

Dune 2000

120	Atreides Missions 5-7
121	Atreides Missions 8-9, Harkonnen Mission 5
122	Harkonnen Mission 6-9
123	Ordos Mission 5-9

Starcraft

130	General strategies, Protoss
131	Human, Zerg

Forsaken

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151	Missions 1-16

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160	Freedom Guard 3-5
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162	Freedom Guard 9-12
163	Imperium 3-8
164	Imperium 11-13

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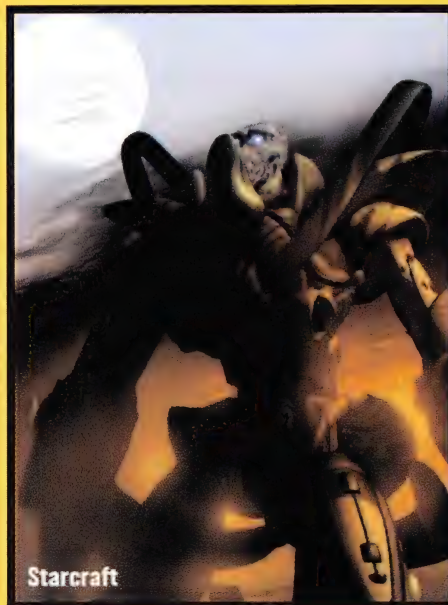
170	Act 1, Act 2 Tyrell Building, Police Station
171	Act 2 (from Animoid Row), Act 3
172	Act 4, Act 5

Curse of Monkey Island

180	Parts 1 & 2
181	Parts 3, 4, 5 & 6

The Last Express

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1. If your fax machine has a phone handset, pick it up and dial 1902 220 423. Follow the instructions given by the warm and friendly mystery voice. You will be asked to key-in the 3-digit code for the game/games you want faxed-back.
2. If your fax machine DOES NOT have a handset, ensure your phone is on the same line as the fax, or use the fax's SPEAKER function. Dial 1902 220 423 and follow the instructions. Press 'Start' on your fax when the voice asks you to do so.
3. Stand back and marvel, as moments later the game help you need rolls majestically forth from your fax machine.

Important: All calls are charged at \$2.50 per minute. Calls from mobile and pay phones may attract a higher rate. Make sure you have permission from the person who pays the phone bill if you're under 18! All charges will appear on your regular phone bill.

TECH SUPPORT. If weird stuff happens, or nothing at all, call 02 9212 4222 for help.

QUAKE

NEWS

OUR NEW MONTHLY COLUMN TO CARRY ALL THE LATEST ON WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH ALL THINGS QUAKE. THIS MONTH IT'S ALL ABOUT THE NEXT BIG THING™ - QUAKE 3: ARENA

With the release of the Q3:A beta test, players are being offered the chance to test the gameplay elements for id software's upcoming release QUAKE3:ARENA. Q3:Atest is an open public forum and your input counts. To get you started - here's our inductive opinions on the weapon situation in Q3:A. So without further ado: PC Powerplay presents a preliminary weapons guide to Q3:A death-matching.

CHAINSAW

The strongest melee weapon in any id software game ever created, the Q3:A chainsaw holds little use in the big wide world of death-match. Although relatively useful within closed corridors as it has the ability to "grip" your opponents, its face-to-face approach means that unless you have a player pinned, inflicting damage will become exponentially more difficult. The other difficulty with using this weapon is the extremely loud sound that it emits. If you decide to use this weapon, keep in mind that players will be able to hear you from rocket jumps away...you can forget about the element of surprise. Personally, I wish that the mace wasn't ditched for the chainsaw, as I would have loved to have seen a mace swinging around wildly aka the sword from ChaosDM.

MACHINEGUN

As with the chainsaw, the default spawn machinegun is the strongest in any id FPS ever assembled. The machinegun looks absolutely grouse and is reminiscent of the US AAR3 assault rifle from GoldenEye 007, and has a similar damage-level of the machinegun from Quake2. Outfitted with just enough rounds to polish off an armour-



less or injured player, the machinegun fits and feels perfect.

SUPER SHOTGUN

Now this is what I call a weapon. Returning to its roots, id software have increased the firing rate and decreased the spread - making this weapon effective up to medium distances. The weapon is distinctly familiar to the super shotie from Quake, though with even more increased firepower. The weapon also sports a laser targeting

device! Satisfaction is an understatement...

As with previous id games, the super shotgun contains an abundance of ammo on most levels, and coupled with the triple damage this has to be one of the most versatile weapons in your arsenal.

(ABOVE) THE SUPER SHOTGUN (AKA STREET HOWITZER) IS NOT EXACTLY KNOWN FOR PIN-POINT ACCURACY, BUT ID HAVE INCLUDED A LASER SIGHT IN ITS LATEST INCARNATION. STILL, LOOKS COOL, EH!

UMM, WHAT'S AN ALIAS?

An alias is just a set of commands or parameters you set when you start up the game that are bound to a key or button. In the example here we've shown you how to bind keys to zoom in your view. At first it might be a little confusing to set your alias up, but really it's quite simple. All that you need is to type the commands (like those listed here) into a file named 'yourfilename.cfg' (we'd recommend using something like zoom.cfg for this example). Save the file into your Quake2\baseq2 directory. Then all you need to do is tell Quake 2 to execute the file when the game launches. In the same directory (\baseq2) you need to either edit (if it's already there) or create an 'autoexec.cfg' file. In 'autoexec.cfg' add the line 'exec zoom.cfg' and you're done! The zoom script we've listed here is just the beginning of what you can do to customise Quake 2 to your liking - you can have as many '.cfg' files as you like, just add the line 'exec filename.cfg' to your autoexec.cfg to keep adding new commands. We'll continue with the tips and examples in future issues, but check out the URL's we've listed for more information and feel free to experiment a little yourself.

THE ART OF THE ALIAS

This month's coolest Quake2 alias is:

bind F12 "+camera"
alias +camera "crosshair o"
alias -camera ";screenshot;crosshair 3"

This alias is extremely useful for taking screenshots within the game as the action unfolds. It removes the crosshair ensuring a clean, crystal clear shot with the click of a button.

GRENAD LAUNCHER

Ya! The grenade launcher has now returned to "useful weapon status" its roots and thus has once again become an extremely effective, multi-functional device. The firing rate has increased and now stands at an acceptable standard though personally I believe that some tweakage still needs to occur on the damage settings...

ROCKET LAUNCHER

Everyone's favourite weapon returns to The Arena - this time with increased firing rates, projectile speeds and something which I think should have occurred a long time ago: a maximum infliction rate of 100 health. Perhaps the most important addition to the rocket launcher in the visual-sensory department, is that the blast radius you see is in actuality the sphere of damage from the rocket. Both Quake and Quake2 only showed a small explosion and the damage was extended past this - thus making it difficult to perceive the amount of damage inflicted upon an enemy (besides using damage or "pain" sounds). This is a factor which I believe is a fantastic addition to Q3:A (the Grenade Launcher has a similar setup). Many Quakers will be happy to note that the Q3:A rocket launcher feels slightly more similar to the Quake rocket launcher than its Quake2 counterpart. The increased rocket speed means that it is much easier to place rockets at player's feet after they have been pushed skyward from the force of previous blasts (this will show particularly against the light classes).

LIGHTNING GUN

An extremely flexible weapon in that it has two modes of fire. If you concentrate fire on one specific area, a maximum amount of damage will be delivered. Alternately you could try the "garden-hose" technique and spray everywhere - this will distribute the damage evenly over the scope of your fire. Coupled with the triple damage, this weapon may be the most effective in the game. My only complaint is that it just doesn't "feel" as nice as the lightning gun from Quake...

RAILGUN

Mmmm, you gotta love this beast! Slightly toned down from its firing speed in Quake2, the railgun is perhaps less useful though still extremely effective. Still inflicting 100 points of damage per shot, the railgun remains a snipers dream. Perhaps the coolest new feature for this weapon is the ability to customise rail-trails. For example, in Quake2 you had blue rays and white particles - in Q3:A you can pick two colours so that you can have your own signature rail. This will be fantastic for clan matches/team orientated games as players could choose their own personal clan colours. Out of all the weapons, the railgun still remains my strong favourite...

PLASMA GUN

Returning from Doom and resembling Quake2's hyperblaster, the plasma gun con-



tains a relatively high rate of fire coupled with a minute amount of splash damage. Personally I like this weapon, particularly the way it blinds a fair amount of your field of vision. The only problem that remains with this weapon is the issue of rendering speeds.

BFG10K

Hmm, I'm still sceptical. The BFG10K is an imbalanced weapon that is (thankfully) less effective than its Quake2 predecessor. Personally I see the BFG as being more of a powerup than a weapon, in that you should be able to use it say 5 times, then it is rendered useless until it respawns again. The fir-

ing rate also needs to be toned down even more than what it is currently set at. Personally, I hope that this weapon is removed entirely from the final version, and replaced with a weapon along the lines of Turok2's cerebral bore. Way cool :)

HAVE YOU ANY SUGGESTIONS ON HOW THE WEAPONS, ITEMS, CLASSES OR ANYTHING ELSE Q3:A RELATED SHOULD BE TWEAKED FOR THE FINAL VERSION OF ARENA? LET US KNOW YOUR OPINIONS. LET PCPP BE YOUR VOICE! E-MAIL ELIH@UQ.NET.AU AND SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS!

CONFUSCATING COMMANDS: QUAKE2 ALIASES EXPLAINED

Aliases are a welcome addition to any deathmatchers' arsenal. Although relatively easy to set up, many players find the creation of scripts to be "out of their league". The Quake2 based command "alias" is used to create a command. Remember, though, that different commands should be separated by the ";" character. The following is a simple sniper's script configured for a wheelmouse. It allows the player to zoom in and adjusts the sensitivity to a suitable level.

```
alias zoom "fov 30; sensitivity 2"
alias norm "fov 90; sensitivity 12"
alias wide "fov 120; sensitivity 12"
bind mwheelup zoom
bind mwheeldown wide
bind mouse3 norm
set m_filter 1
```

The above are three aliases, though together they perform one unique function: zooming. Basically - if you move your wheelmouse forward (ie scroll upward), your field of view zooms in to a span of 30 degrees and the mouse sensitivity is lowered to a less responsive level. The reason the sensitivity differs is because you don't want the mouse to whip all over the place within a zoomed mode. As you can see, scrolling upward zooms inward, scrolling down zooms to a wider-than-normal field of vision and clicking the button reverts to normal mode. No comes the "binding" of the commands. When a certain key/button is pressed, the corresponding command or alias will be executed. For example, mouse button three is bound to the "norm" command, which diverts the fov (Field Of View) back to 90 and the (mouse) sensitivity to 12. The last command "set m_filter 1" will ensure that the actual zoom will be smoother within the game.

Aliases can be used to execute almost everything there is to do with Quake2. There are scripts for rocket jumping, changing CD tracks, adjusting rates, recording demos, adjusting skins - if you can name it, chances are that it's probably available. If what you're after doesn't exist - create your own and make it available for all :)

Check out these sources:

<http://www.planetquake.com/console/>
<http://www.captured.com/thebind/>

Q2DM1

~THE EDGE~

OUR GUIDE TO QUAKE MASTERY CONTINUES, WITH SPECIFICALLY TAILORED ADVICE FOR EACH QUAKE 2 DM LEVEL. BY ELIH BRADING

Q2DM1, aka The Edge, is one of the most popular 1-on-1 levels and for good reason - the balance is just about as perfect as you'd want. Balance is the key to a successful deathmatch level, as this goes some way to prevent the total owning of a lesser player and ensures a faster, more gripping, white knuckled fragfest.

Winning on Q2DM1 requires strategy more so than a good aim. It is vital to know how the map is structured, what items lie where, and how to use this knowledge to track your opponent. Above all, you must know how to control the map. This guide will therefore attempt to provide an insight into how the top players achieve their domination skills and engagement, and with practice you'll be up there with the best.

The level can be divided up into four sections; what I will refer to as the Central Area (containing the hyperblaster), the Outdoor Area (leading to the railgun and including the upper rocket launcher), the Window Room (beside the Central Area and containing the lone slug) and the Megahealth Room (containing, surprisingly enough, the megahealth). The area to control is without question the Megahealth Room as it contains most of what you need - 120 health, 50 armour, a backpack and chaingun ammo. Above all, it looks out into all the other regions of the map with the exception of the Window room - and there's only two ways your opponent can escape from there; those being coming out into the Central area or running around up to the Outdoor Area via the super shotgun (though there is one exception involving a rocket jump from the crates!).

THE CENTRAL AREA



THE MEGAHEALTH ROOM



However perhaps the most important factor for the experienced player is that fact that it is the only room in q2dm1 where you can hear a player at any given time (provided they're not static).

When controlling the Megahealth Room it is important to know whether your opponent is towards the Central Area or in the Outdoor Area collecting the railgun. If you are certain they're in the Central Area or Window Room then just alternate between looking out into the Central and Outdoor areas. On the other hand if they're in the Outdoor Area, immediately check to see whether they're coming up the stairs, going for the railgun, or heading under the tunnel towards the Central Area. Whichever way they choose you've got them; as they're an easy target coming out into the wide open Central Area, or just a chaingun job if they're heading up the stairs. If they've gone for the rail, you should position yourself at the boxes of bullets (or somewhere near

there; you don't want to be predictable) and time how long it should take for them to come back out of the tunnel: Start chaining the water here, but only in short bursts and wait until you're near empty before you refill via the bullet packs. The intention is to hit them a bit in the water, then let them come out and finish them off then. Standing up on the walkway you're very hard to hit provided you keep moving and keep your fire on them to screw up their aim. Resist the temptation to switch to rail, or to jump down there with them (unless you're positive you'll finish them off).

Get Control

Of course, controlling the megahealth room is all very well and good once you're there, but how the hell do you actually get control of it in the first place? Basically, it comes down to where you spawn. If you appear in the Megahealth Room first up, you should immediately arm yourself with the chaingun. What you do here depends entirely on where your opponent is - if you think your opponent is about to appear in the room guns blazing, it's probably a good idea to stock up within the Megahealth Room (preferably using the circlejump method

1 ON 1 LEVEL GUIDES



described in the previous issue of PCPP). Then you're ready to take a few hits, plus you'll have 250 bullets to play with - and your opponent will be without armour. The next option could be a good idea if you know your opponent's rail skills aren't top-notch, yet they've spawned near the railgun and taken the opportunity to grab it:

It involves picking up the chain then going up to the grenade launcher and running around to the upper rocket launcher - from here you should be able to stay at the rocket launcher and, armed with 200 bullets, you should be able to finish off your opponent whose only protection consists of a few armour shards. You'll also have a rocket launcher handy in case the chaingun didn't finish them. The great thing about this tactic is you can drop down, collect your opponent's railgun and pop back into the Megahealth Room with all the weapons you really need. If

THE OUTSIDE AREA



you can, circlejumping over to the ledge in the Outdoor Area for a quick 10 rockets would be a good idea while you have the opportunity.

But what if I die?

Now comes the hardest part of all: regaining control of the Megahealth Room if you have the unfortunate predicament of either losing control or not getting it in the first place.

This becomes exponentially more difficult if your opponent is a better player than you; but what you must try and do is sneak up on them and use the fact that you would now have a rocket launcher to your advantage. Because you probably won't have a chaingun in this situation, the rocket launcher is your best choice. The best place to sneak up from is the Outdoor Area (by running up behind the super shotgun).

From here, you have a couple of options: you could try the brute force method of dashing in, firing a rocket then running around behind your opponent before they know what's happening. Or you could take a harder, yet probably safer method that requires you being able to strafejump or circlejump from the megahealth to the top of the backpack blocks. The process involves waiting for the megahealth to respawn (it shouldn't be too long if they got it when the game first started) then running in and rocketjumping to it, then immediately jumping across to the top of the backpack blocks - all going to plan, you should have been able to hit them as they were poking their head out into the Central Area once while at the megahealth and again when you're landing on the blocks conveniently placed right above your opponent! Of course, this plan isn't as effective if they were, for example, getting the armour. However this is why sound knowledge is imperative in Quake II. The other advantage of this method is that there's every possibility your opponent will stick their head out into the Outdoor Area to check if you're there, in which case you have the upper hand and should earn you a free hit.

As you can see, control is the key to winning any 1-on-1. If you watch a few games of the best players you'll realise exactly how important it is. Combined with a good aim and quick reflexes, plus a collection of trick-jumps, you'll immediately place yourself in the top few percent of Quake II players. But the important thing is to keep practicing - preferably on a LAN, but you can still apply the principle of control to an Internet game. Without practicing against real players you won't understand how other players think, which of course will place you at a rather large disadvantage when you step into the arena of multiplayer.

So play smart, play hard, and stay in control whilst on the Edge...

THE WINDOW ROOM



1 ON 1 LEVEL GUIDES

Q2DM2

~TOKAY'S TOWERS~

DONE ALL THERE IS TO DO IN DM1? TIME TO MOVE ON, AND WHERE BETTER TO GO THAN TO DM2!

Tokay's Towers: a map of a multitude of hallways and a haven for rocket launcher/super shotgun usage, is centred around the domination of the quad damage artefact and the spot control of the rocket launcher room and chaingun pathway. Tokay's is a map that hasn't really received the distinction it deserves. Crafted to promote multi-level mayhem and for evenly matched, fast paced gameplay, the minimal number of health kits mean that there is less of a chance that one single player will dominate the pack.

Get Quad, get Health

An accomplished player will ensure that he/she continuously maintains order over both the megahealth and the quad damage. These two items go hand-in-hand, as they are situated within just frames of each other. Being loaded with 200 health will protect you from loose fire, which tends to occur when people see a quadded player come screaming towards them.

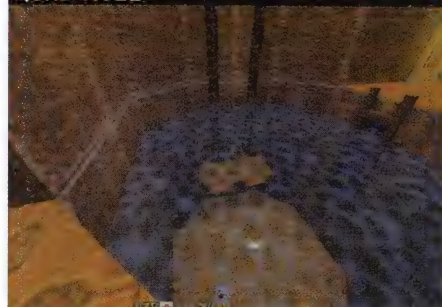
Normally, you would quickly rocket jump to the megahealth, grab the quad damage whilst you arm yourself with a super shotgun

MEGAHEALTH LEDGE



(which is easy to obtain seeing as it is situated on the platform below the megahealth) or alternately - the chaingun. Both weapons are useful in different situations. Personally, I find the super shotgun to be of the upmost efficiency due to the lack of a spin-up delay - which can make all the difference when you are travelling around the snaking corridors of Tokay's Towers. More often than not however, I will be inclined to pull out the chaingun when travelling through the underwater tunnels or through the stepped area. Once you have loaded up, travel with speed (i.e: strafe-

QUAD HOLE



jump) to the rocket launcher or steps area - both of which are high traffic areas that are always stocked with players waiting in anticipation to become chunky kibbles.

The most typical route is back along the bridge, through the winding corridor then down to the rockets/bullets/shells ledge that has two ladders leading to it (though you should always change your routes so that players cannot anticipate your actions). From here you have the option of polishing off players that are duelling in this area, or travelling in a relatively safe fashion to the rocket

launcher area. From here, quickly switch to the chaingun and get some rapid-fire action happening, though be careful of rocket-wielding snipers from above, which can bring your fun-run to an abrupt end within seconds.

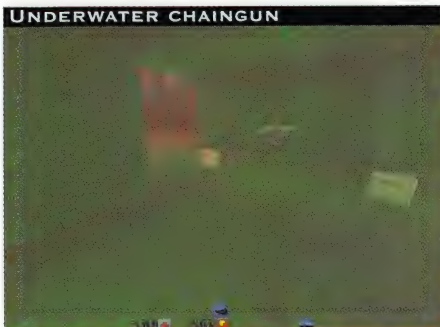
Due to the presence of corridors and overhanging ledges, the most effective, general-purpose weapon is the rocket launcher. The splash damage that results from firing this weapon means that less accuracy is required because you can shoot rockets at the ceiling or nearby walls to your opponents. Be careful when carrying this weapon through tight corners though, as a player using a super shotgun could easily pin you into the corner, causing you to inflict damage upon yourself. When this occurs you should attempt to aim just behind your opponent or at one of the walls positioned on either side of them.

GRENADE LAUNCHER RELOAD ROOM



1 ON 1 LEVEL GUIDES

UNDERWATER CHAINGUN



Another reason why the rocket launcher is so effective on Tokay's is due to the presence of the many ammo packs for it. There are, in total, 35 rockets scattered throughout the map and, best of all, they are evenly distributed around the level. This means that a majority of occurrences will see a plentiful amount of ammunition made available to stock the barrels of your weapon.

Due simply to the nature of the map, you will find that many campers will position themselves at the top of lifts - particularly the one that leads to the megahealth and at the elevator leading to the body armour and railgun/BFGrok. Basically, if you aren't firing rockets up at the ceiling whilst travelling up the lift - you're probably dead. Personally, I see it as a challenge to flush out a camper: if you're attempting to take out a player who is guarding the body armour elevator, you should be firing rockets from the top of the ladder (the one that leads to the super shotgun bridge), aiming for the roof or back wall in all situations. A similar technique should be employed when attacking a megahealth protector. Shoot rockets at the ceiling. For optimum angle, I suggest firing from where the bridge joins the quad damage room. Remember also, that lobbing grenades up there will help to clear out static players.

Peace and serenity

By far the quietest place on Tokay's Tower is at the Grenade Launcher. This spot is an excellent, general purpose refuelling zone: it contains 10 shells, 100 bullets, 5 rockets, 10 grenades, 50 cells and 30 health. Often, during matches of 12 players or above, I will grab the rocket launcher and chaingun and sit in this area for the duration of the map. This area is simple to guard, as you are on the higher ground (just up the lift), and the players who will come into your field of vision are people who have fallen down from above or people that are swimming through the tunnel. Whichever way they come from, they will always be susceptible to your attack. Players that fall from above will take a while to realign themselves and adjust their yaw, while players that swim through the tunnel will have difficulty in seeing you through the water (unless of course they have gl_polyblend set to 0).

Useful Shortcuts

Using the strafe jump method, in two jumps you will find yourself at the body armour. Wait till the lift is approximately half way across the abyss and then jump. When

ROCKET LAUNCHER ROOM



you hit the moving platform jump again straight away - don't pause. The key to strafe jumping, as many of you would have learnt from the last issue, is to maintain speed through momentum.

A strafe jump from the megahealth ledge will land you onto the other side of the room: this saves an extra jump. An alternative is to circle jump, as this will ensure that you are aiming towards a more popular entrance point.

In the quad 'puddle', you can jump from the ladder, to the small lift, then from the lift to the top of the U-shaped platform in one swift double jump movement.

From the twisted corridor, you can strafe jump across the entire U-shaped area to the opposite side (this saves you walking around) - thus ensuring that you aren't prone to attack from the ledge below.

The bottom steps area contains two lad-

ders that lead to the rockets/shells/bullet packs. If you stick to the sides near either respawn pad and strafe jump, you will land on the ladder without touching the water. This move is imperative and I suggest that you master it quickly. I personally avoid going this way altogether, as you are prone to attack from almost any imaginable angle.

THE BFG LIFT



FIRST LOOK Unreal TOURNAMENT



Multiplayer Arms Race reaches a quick-draw. Can a patched-up Unreal kill Quake3:Arena? By Ed Dawson

There's an avalanche of multiplayer-only 3D action games arising these days: the groundbreaking Tribes, and the upcoming titles by id and Valve software are all gambits based on the incredible joy found in wasting, and being wasted by, people and artificial players in competition and cooperation. Team games online are the way of the future, with developers scrambling to make lag-resistant gameplay engines and teamplay-friendly AI that can work in a group framework, take orders from human players and fill out a team game where the number of human players is lacking.

Epic are joining the gravy train with Unreal Tournament. In the final stages of development, this adaptation of their hit Unreal incorporates new modern gameplay modes, some of which have been vapourware in other games, before now.

Animation overload

Unreal's advanced 3D engine is still geared towards displaying grandiose outdoor scenes, and intricate models with animation overload. It's gorgeous eye-candy, but it's also a design theory that impinges heavily upon the requirements of a multiplayer experience. Epic promise that the code has been heavily tweaked for this mainly multiplayer game though, and who are we not to believe them?

Along with the engine, the weapons available in the game are modified from the raw, original Unreal tools. There's a new Double AutoMag mode, where you can use two of the projectile pistols at once, the ImpactHammer is a chainsaw-esque tool that pistons about and only hits things at melee range, the Stinger is a typical giant rocket launcher type device that is roughly equivalent to a BFG, and the PulseGun is a plasma rifle clone from the DOOM days (but its secondary fire mode is an instant-hit beam of energy that you can wave about - something like the electrical thing from Ghostbusters). The other weapons all still exist in slightly altered states: the only one dropped is the basic dispersion pistol.

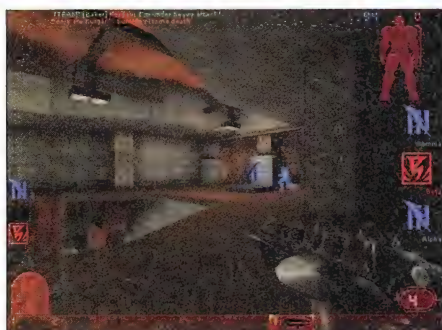
The Private Ryan bit

The cool new things about Unreal Tournament are the way they've incorporated new Team game variations well before other



(above) "LordSITH smeared Dante with his piston of love"?!! Are you sure this is going to get past the OFLC? (below) existing weapons have been beefed up in visual effect and sound (they needed to be...), while a whole bunch of new guns are included.





(top) Ahh... what every game needs - a respectable beheading. Unreal introduces some top multiplayer features, but not much else...
(above) The player models and skins do look good, and are easier to see.

developers, including Assault, where one team is dug into a defensive emplacement, and must defend it against the invading team, who have to destroy a target within the fortress. In particular one new map is designed around the harrowing opening scenes from the film Saving Private Ryan, with an opposed beach landing.

There are several others: a built-in Capture The Flag mode, generic teamplay scenarios and Last Man Standing, where players have limited respawns into the gameworld, and get knocked out of the game when they expire.

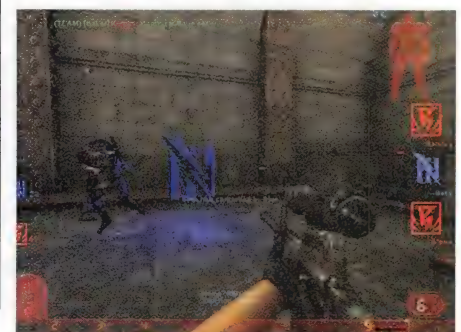
There's also three gameplay profiles: Normal, Hardcore and Turbo. These are supposed to tweak player speed and weapon damage to suit personal tastes, or styles of play. Unfortunately again the focus on gameplay has been lost, as these profiles don't make enough of an appreciable difference to the game to be worthwhile using.

Hardcore Unreal enthusiasts will be pleased to find that all of the Unreal patches and improvements ever coded are hardwired into Tournament from the outset.

Hot bots

Built-in Bots have always been a strength of the Unreal experience, they've been considerably improved, with a nice GUI interface to choose their difficulty level and whether they scale their abilities according to your own performance. They can now be ordered about in-game and have quite an extensive range of specific commands.

Overall it's a nice effort. Unreal is a very pretty, single-player oriented game. To beat other multiplayer titles this needs the promised major re-vamp built in at a low level. There's a ton of potential showing in the beta I spent a few days with - bring on the game!



No matter how long you've been around PCs, there'll still be times when it gets a bit too confusing. Ashton's there to help, cos he's just a nice guy.



Letter of the Month
Win a PSI Hercules Dynamite TNT

Mouse Rates

Q My real question is about the trusty mouse. Not the kind we like to kill, especially in Sin, but the kind we use. I've heard a bit about the USB mouse in that it's better for games (esp. deathmatching) because it refreshes faster. Is that true? And what about the programs used to change the PS/2 rate. Do they work? Could you include a couple on your disc if you think it's worth it?

George

A You've touched on an issue I

think many gamers are unaware of. So many players spend their time trying to improve frame rates to get smoother gameplay in order to get fast, accurate kills. The problem is, half the time your jumpy movement has nothing to do with the beefiness of your PC. If you're a mouse player, which applies to just about all Quake players, the responsiveness of your movement is directly related to the responsiveness of your mouse.

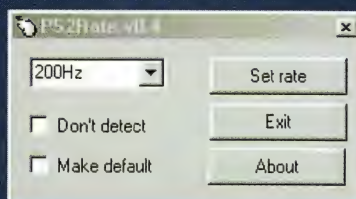
If you've ever played with a machine that uses a PS/2 mouse you've probably noticed that it drags windows around the desktop smoother than on a system using a serial mouse — and it's got nothing to do with the video card (assuming we're comparing equal hardware). It's all about how fast the mouse is sampled — the refresh rate of the mouse as it were. People with USB mice have been trumpeting how smooth their responsiveness is, because the USB ports sample at around 120Hz. By comparison, a PS/2 mouse samples at around 60Hz, and a serial port at something like 30Hz. What it means is that when you move your mouse in Quake, you get far finer movement on a USB mouse than a serial mouse.

Currently the standard for new motherboards over the last year has been a move to install PS/2 mouse ports, allowing motherboards to have two serial ports free. Chances are if you're using a PII system you've got a PS/2 mouse. Anything older and you're probably using a mouse connected to a serial port.

Now, the good news is that a chap on the Internet wrote a very simple program to change the sampling rate of the PS/2 port. It's called PS2RATE and allows you to sample at anywhere from 10Hz to 200Hz, faster than USB! I've been using it under Windows 98 (it runs in my Startup) for quite a while now and the difference is amazing. Just drag a few windows around on screen and your machine looks like it's twice as fast. In fact, another way of looking at it is that it's always been this fast, but a low sampling rate means your mouse movement is interpolated along the path you're moving the mouse (which is why when you do large movements you see more jumping while dragging). When it comes to mouse controlled FPS games, this extra smoothness is a huge bonus, assuming the FPS game isn't being limited by your graphics hardware.

Also, cleaning your mouse can have a dramatic effect on the smoothness of its movement, so put on a frilly apron, whip out the cleaning wiping fabric cloth thingy, and clean it!

You can find PS2RATE at <http://www.bluesnews.com/files/misc/ps2mouseate.shtml> or on this month's cover CD (in the utilities section).



PS2RATE is a rather nice and nifty program.

Glenn's advice

Q The two important things to remember with 56K modems that is not often mentioned is Distance and Line Condition.

With the Distance rule you have a 10km distance to play with. This 10km is measured by the distance from Your House to Your Telephone Exchange and the distance from your Internet Service Provider to Their Telephone Exchange cannot be more than a total of 10kms. If it is more than this you will not get above 28.8k performance. Also both Telephone Exchanges must be DIGITAL (A quick phone call to Telstra should yield this information. I say 'should'...)

With Line Condition it does not matter if you live next door to your provider if you have bad quality telephone lines you will get substandard performance every time. A good way to check your line condition is to pick up your phone and dial any number once and listen to the phone. If there is excessive static or hiss on the line this is what your modem has to wade through and you will get slower connections because of "error correction" on your modem. You can try

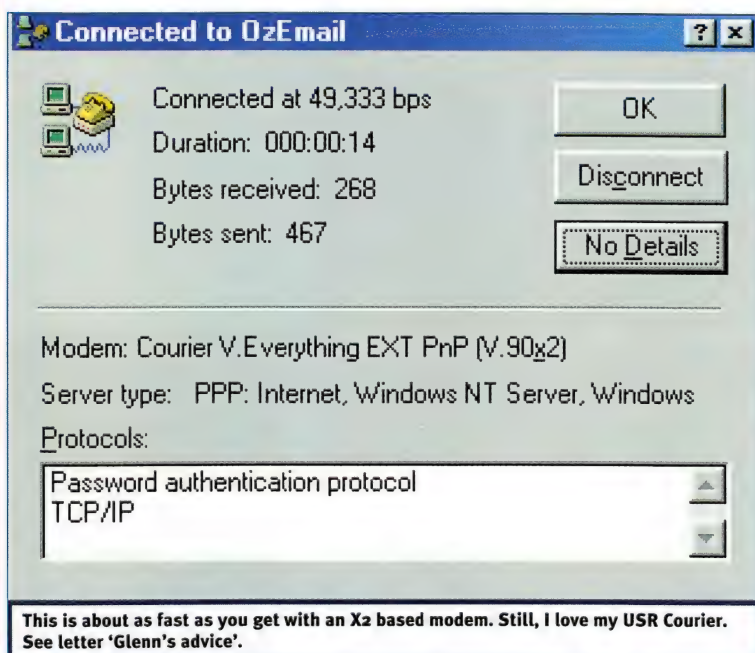
When you write, remember to include as much pertinent information as possible. Send your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT and any associated *.INI files for Windows that might tell me more about your problem. Give me as detailed an explanation as you can and be sure to include as much detail as possible about your PC. Feel free to email your questions or, if you want to snail mail, please remember to write clearly or better still, print your letters. Please note that due to the volume of messages we receive, we cannot guarantee a response to your queries.

Setup
PC PowerPlay
78 Renwick St
Redfern
NSW 2016
setup@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

and call Telstra and see if they will do anything but the last time I checked they only GARAUNTEE a connection speed of 2,400bps so anything above this, in their eyes, is a bonus.

At the end of all this you have to remember that a 56k connection will be a rare beast indeed and you would be lucky to ever see a true 56k connection. More often than not if your setup meets the right circumstances you should get between 40k to 47k connections but end results will vary. Last big tip of today, if you have a 33.6k modem and you only ever achieve 28.8k connections at best, even though all your setups is correct and your ISP supports your modem, buying a 56k modem WILL NOT increase your connection speeds. It comes back to distance and line conditions.

Glenn



A Thanks Glenn, that's excellent advice there! I'd also like to add that, indeed, although 56k modems are branded as such, the maximum you can achieve on standard copper wire phone lines is about 53k. Standard ISPs using X2 or V.90 will get you about 47k to 49k connections. K56Flex modems can manage up to 51k and sometimes 52k if you're extremely lucky. Take note that if you upgrade your K56Flex to V.90, expect a speed drop. The V.90 standard emphasises stability not speed. Lastly, remember also that 56k refers to downloading information, all 56k modems can only upload at 33.6k. All this makes you wonder why they're called 56k in the first place, doesn't it?

Siblings suck

Q Hi, I recently tried to update the BIOS in my computer, it still had the one from late 1997. I went to the motherboard manufacturer's homepage and downloaded the correct flash update for my computer. I rebooted to DOS mode and ran the program from a floppy disk. I entered the name of the new BIOS when prompted and saved a copy of the old BIOS when prompted. The program then started to install the new BIOS, the progress indicator quickly moved to 50% but then seemed to stop. It did not move for several minutes and there did not seem to be any activity. I left the computer momentarily to get a drink, only to return to the site of my 3 year old nephew pushing the reset button!! Now the computer will not boot. Is there anything that can be done, short of a new motherboard.

Anonymous

A You see this is why gamers younger than 7 should be seen (serving you coke, beer and pizza) but not heard. They don't have anywhere near the vast experience of a powerful gamer to touch, use and take full advantage of the dangerous beasts on which we play. Er... anyway, let's start with the bad news. Currently, your PC is stuffed. There's two ways to un-stuff it: try an automated BIOS install, or get the BIOS chip replaced.

The former requires a motherboard that is capable of loading a BIOS from a boot floppy. You'll have to search around on the manufacturer's Web page and see if they use a BIOS which can be installed by simply copying the BIOS to a DOS boot floppy (which you'll need to make on another machine) and holding down a certain key when the machine attempts to boot up. Some BIOSes actually have different areas, upper and lower (or something like that). One is the 'boot' BIOS that, generally, is never replaced and it allows you to do neat things like stick in a floppy, hold down a key, and automatically load into the other side of the BIOS whatever BIOS file is found on the floppy. Not all motherboards support this style of BIOS, and if yours doesn't then your only option is to replace the bug-

gered BIOS chip itself. This is very easy, as the chips are socketed on the motherboard and easily identifiable. The hard part is getting one. You can either approach a PC shop who stock the same motherboard as you and see if they'd be willing to give/sell you just the BIOS chip (somewhat unlikely, as it leaves them with a dud board) or write off to the manufacturers overseas and get a replacement chip mailed to you, which as can imagine will probably take quite some time.

The moral of the story here readers is clear - keep siblings away from your precious pal, at least until they reach an age where they can join you in a game of Quake, and then they become target practice.

Drive copy

Q Great mag have swapped from imported one to yours, keep up the good work.

I am going to buy an 8 gig hard drive and I want to put all the information from my 2.1 gig on to the new one so I can remove the old one. The reason I want to take the old one out is the salesman told me that the old one

will slow the new one down as they are alot faster now.

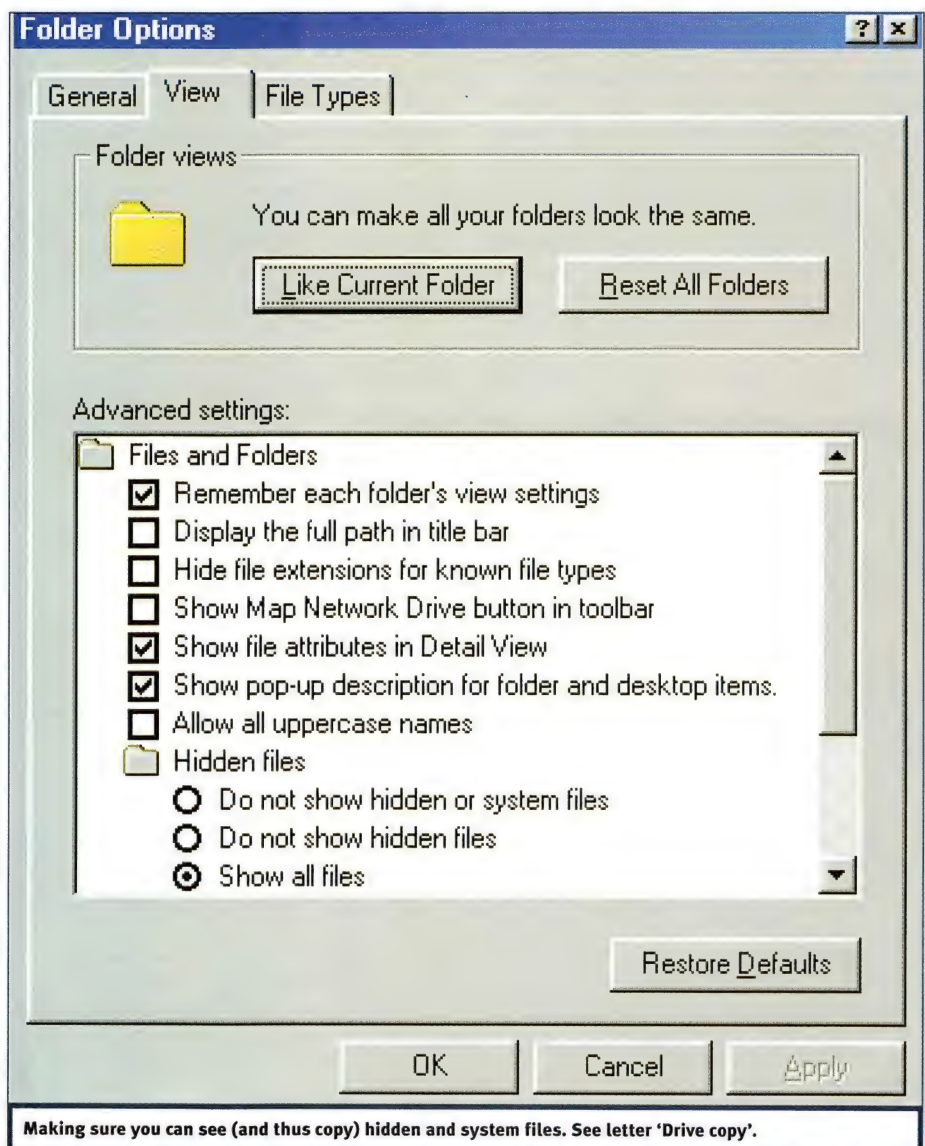
What I need to know is after I slave the new drive to the old one how do I transfer the entire contents of the old drive to it so it will boot etc as if it was there from day one. I will then make it the master drive and take the old one out and retire it.

Steve

A There are many ways you can do this, there's even commercial packages that will handle drive imaging for you. But why fork out cash when you can do it the Doc Ashton's Dodgey Hard Drive Copy (DAD-HDC) way?

So, firstly make sure your new drive has been partitioned and formatted. During this process you should have created a primary partition (the first partition) on your new drive, and under Windows it should be registered as D:. Before we begin we need to make sure you can view all files in Windows:

Goto My Computer —> View —> Folder Options —> View
Untick 'hide file extensions for known file types'



Tick 'Show file attributes in detail view'
Under Hidden Files select 'Show all files'
Click OK and all that

Now for the really technical part — open up My Computer on your desktop, click on C:, select the first file or directory, press CTRL-A to select everything then CTRL-C. Click on My Computer again, click on your D: and then press CTRL-V. Depending on how full your drive was, this may take a fair while so go and order some pizza, watch a few vids or harrass the neighbors for a while.

'But', I hear you say 'That's going to stuff up all the paths if Windows is now on D: isn't it?'. Nope, not at all. Your PC assigns drive letters in the order it finds primary, and then logical partitions. When the old drive is removed, D: will become C:.

All we need to do now is make D: bootable. So, open up a DOS prompt and type:

SYS D:

And you're done. Turn off your machine, remove your old drive, make sure your new drive is set as master and turn your baby on. If all is well, you should see Windows starting. There is a catch, however. This is the DADHDC because I personally haven't tried this, so I can't confirm it'll work. One thing for sure is that there'll be files locked by Windows while Windows is running, and it's possible Windows won't let you copy these files. If this is the case, you'll be informed as such by Windows when you're copying the files. Write down these file names and, once copying has finished, reboot your machine to just a DOS prompt and copy then individually (using the COPY command) from the source directory on your C: to the equivalent directory on D:.

The Great Biological Machine

Q So you guys worship your computers like temples, doing anything to keep them up to date and in tip-top shape but what happens when your own body starts to fail? You know what I mean. You work full time, sometimes on the weekend,

you have a family and a social life but slowly over the years your eyes become road maps of major city centres and you body, probably your neck, needs a professional massage daily. Do you guys sacrifice all in the name of gaming?

And why write to "setup"? Because I want to know what to do when these things start to happen. Surely, the great guru of "setup" has suggestions on tweaking the human body?

Help!

George

A George is the man! He wins 'Letter Of The Month' for not only did he send in a good Setup question (elsewhere in these pages), but also this highly technical letter which addresses something each and every gamer faces. The health of the Great Biological Machine (tm).

Do we sacrifice all in the name of gaming? What, are you nuts? It sounds like you think PCPP staff are complete game heads who do nothing but eat, think and sleep games. Oh yeah, sure, that's the tough-guy super-gamer come-worship-us image we like to portray, afterall, it's fun. But games do not a social life make, nor ultimate happiness do they impart. Er.. hang on..

Sorry about that, this is the real Doc Ash here. Some dammed intruder managed to bypass my defences and take over my cyborg body. Wassat? Why do I have a cyborg body? Why else, but to keep me gaming long into the night! I don't need no stinkin' fast food or caffeine, just plug me into the wall and I'll buzz along until them moo moo beasts come home. You want to know how to tweak the human body? Pah! Remove those pesky biological bits, replace them with steel and circuits, they won't let you down (and you won't have to shower either, neat huh?). So there ya go. Worship games. Forsake your body. Become one with your machine. Need I say more?

Tech Tips

Tip type thingies to make your PC stuff go better

More reader submitted tips this month. Thanks guys!

Handy registry tips

I am writing this in regards to the letter "Nifty Idea" from Thomas Jacobs about automatically turning the system off...

If Thomas wishes to turn the system of at a keystroke (assuming he's using an ATX power supply that is), all he needs to do is add a shortcut to wherever he wants it and make it run the following:

C:\<Windows>\RUNDLL.EXE user.exe,exitwindows

with <Windows> being your Win95/98 directory. This shortcut will shut the system down (and turn it off with ATX power supplies).

The next step is to edit the shortcut and give it a Hot Key for running it. Reboot the system so that the Hot Key becomes registered and it should just be a case of making the required keystroke when you want it.

I also use this shortcut in coordination with Win98's Task Scheduler in order to automatically turn my PC off at the early hours of the morning if I'm D/Ling big files off the net.

Another not-so-handy command under RunDLL is the following:

C:\<Windows>\RUNDLL.EXE user.exe,exitwindowsexec

This will reboot the PC for you (which we can already do with CTL-ALT-DEL anyway), but using this seems a little less barbaric on all the poor Windows files that are still open on reboot.

Comothionon

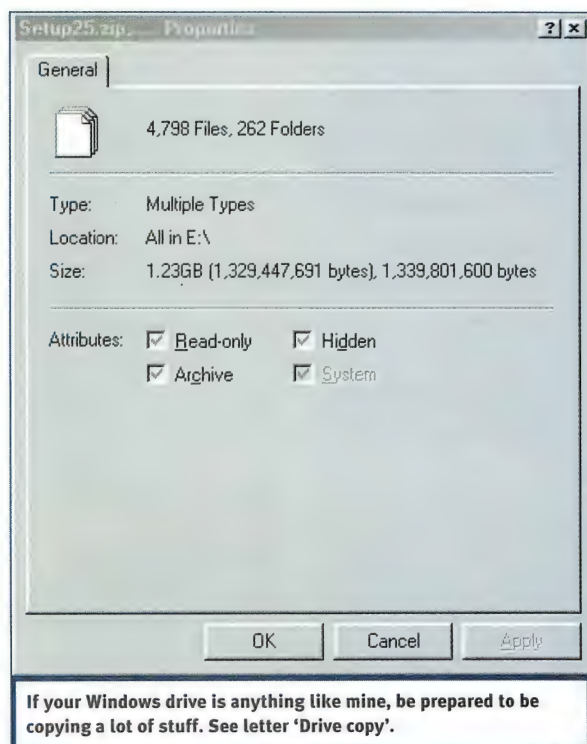
One ton Yun

This is probably not the best tips for you gamers out there. But there WILL be a time when you go out into a socially live world to get milk, buy food or probably buy more games. But some gamers spend their life at home playing their games so I thought you (gaming) people out there would like a few tips on surviving the outside world.

1. When you find someone to talk to, never say the word computer. You can get beaten up!
2. Seeing nerds outside talking to each other in a nerdy way. Don't mess with them cause you can get beaten up!
3. You walk outside the school yard after school. You stop by a fish n' chips store. Don't get tartare sauce. Um... yep you can get beaten up!
4. Some computer freaks come along and ask you to hang around with them. Don't! Of course you can get beaten up!
5. You finally buy your favorite game after waiting for ages. You suddenly find someone stealing it off you. Oh forget about rules! GO BEAT HIM UP INSTEAD!

Yun

Yeah... ah... that's great Yun. Have you taken your medication today?



PC PowerPlay

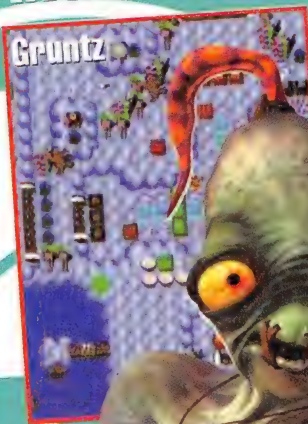
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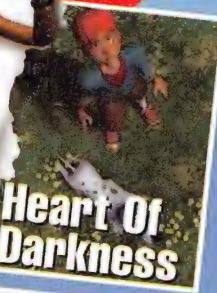
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3D TECH NEWS

Microsoft make friends with gamers with DirectX 7, and NEC unveil the PowerVR 250. By Jere Lawrence

Recent news from Microsoft is that DirectX 7 is coming along nicely and a beta should be available as you read this. Interestingly DirectX 7.0 is being developed on beta versions of Windows 2000 (NT 5). Windows NT, for as long as it's been available has always been aimed at the business user, starting its life as a server operating system.

As Windows 95/98 progressed however it has become

told that access to the hardware was of prime importance and to let the developers take over from there. Years later the developers' focus has now shifted. They're asking for DirectX to do a lot more so greater effort can be put into the game and not things such as texture management.

New DirectX functions will come in the form of hardware acceleration of lighting, transforms and extends. Currently DirectX passes most rendering chores to

non-endorsed extensions that would let hardware vendors basically add any feature they consider important.

Of these options the third is the most controversial. Some very vocal game developers and all the hardware companies are eager for wide-open extensions but the majority of game developers don't want them. With a myriad of extensions they fear that the API could become diluted or that buggy extensions

DLS 1 (downloadable samples).

DLS 2 will also be fully implemented and is already supported by most PCI sound cards. This is something that I've been frustrated with for time immemorial. Since Creative released the AWE 32 with sound fonts I could never figure out why this has been so underutilised. Using sound fonts, developers could have downloaded a myriad of sound effects to the card and used MIDI for sound effects, drastically freeing up CPU.

This is what is being proposed by Microsoft now with DLS 2 (it's only taken 10 years). By downloading audio samples using DLS 2, all cards, not just Creative's Sound Font technology, will be able to generate sound effects via MIDI. This is extremely exciting because sound effect methodology incorporated this way would reduce bandwidth-eating data immensely and will dramatically increase frame rates.

For as much as we love to hate the Windows operating system, improvements to DirectX are extremely exciting. More features ultimately means that a broader array of games can support better graphics, better audio, better connectivity, and improved performance. There's also the fact that as an API, developers can focus on game design and play rather than on debugging code. And better games is something we're all crying out for.

Hardware Acceleration DirectX 7.0 Extensions DirectMusic

apparent that it's never going to be as robust as the NT system. With this realisation there's hope that Windows 2000 will integrate all the crash protection of Windows NT and all the graphical advantages that 95/98 offers such as DirectX. Currently only DirectX 5 is available for NT which limits available games rather significantly.

In fact, Microsoft are aiming for Windows 2000 to be the target platform for game developers. Says a Microsoft official, "The goal is for developers to use Windows 2000 for the development platform but still target the titles for Windows 95/98". Good news for those of us sick of our constantly crashing almost brain dead Windows system - well, hopefully anyway.

Direct3D Features

Upgrades to DirectX will revolve around utilising 3D hardware further. The DirectX team have been aiming to improve performance for Direct3D, particularly texture-downloading and management. According to Microsoft, when they asked developers about 3D features back in the early days, they were

the graphics accelerator but geometric lighting and transforms are still done by the CPU. This new functionality could increase hardware lighting by a factor of 4. Under DX6, because of CPU utilisation, only about 8 lights can be created, under DX7 the amount should be increased to about 32.

Extensions

Extensions are an option for DirectX 7 that are rather exciting, but will have to be done right. The new extensions option will allow hardware developers to add features to Direct3D that aren't in the base version of the API. OpenGL already has an extension mechanism and Microsoft sees the potential for three different extension options.

These are :

1. Fully Microsoft-approved extensions that will likely appear in a future version of Direct3D and will be supported by Microsoft.
2. Vendor extensions that are semi-approved. They may never become a part of Direct3D but are compelling enough to perhaps even be included in driver certification testing.
3. Wide open, unsupported,

could cause tech-support nightmares. Having worked so hard with Windows 95 to create a stable environment for gaming, wide-open extensions could throw this into disarray.

Audio Changes

DirectMusic, currently part of DirectX 6.1 is to make a full progression in DX7. DX7 will feature a full software synthesizer that will use sounds licensed from the Roland Sound Canvas. According to Microsoft, for a software synth it has relatively low CPU use and even supports





PowerVR 250 Neon

I've always been particularly fond of the PowerVR range of 3D accelerators. Years before the Matrox G200 and the Riva TNT, NEC/Videologic developed an accelerator that featured 24 bit colour and looked a treat when compared to other cards on offering including the 3Dfx.

Now the latest PowerVR card is upon us. Called the PowerVR 250 it might seem a little late but this little stunner is definitely not out of the race.

So, the question remains. Why is the card over a year late? This is due to a number of reasons. First there's Sega. Their new console, the Sega Dreamcast



uses the PowerVR 250 and NEC have a contract for delivery of about 500,000 chips. Secondly, NEC and Videologic have wanted to ensure that the problems that plagued the first PowerVRs don't ever happen again. To alleviate any problems, NEC/Videologic

FEATURES

- YUV to RGB colour space conversion
- MPEG2 decode assist (motion compensation acceleration)
- Integrated 250MHz DAC (1600x1200@85Hz)
- Colour key overlay
- Multiple video windows
- 32-bit floating point Z-buffering calculation function with no performance penalty
- Up to 5M polygons/sec (forward facing delivered to the screen)
- Fill rate 200-500M pixels/sec (depending on scene complexity)
- Bus mastered parameter fetch
- Advanced texturing (Bi-linear, Tri-linear, Anisotropic, Bump-mapping)
- True colour 32 bpp pipeline
- Translucency sorting
- Image super-sampling/scene anti-aliasing
- Per pixel loadable table fog
- Specular highlights with offset colours
- Pentium II and AMD K6-2 3D Now! optimised
- Support for up to 32MB of SD/SG RAM
- Alpha + Multipass Blending
- TV-Video I/O Bilinear up and down scaling
- 2X AGP (133Mhz) with sideband addressing



have a team working with Microsoft to make sure that all the features of the PowerVR 250 will be supported by DirectX.

PowerVR Vs conventional 3D

The PowerVR has always been an exciting accelerator because it does things differently. Years ago it was processing real time rays and shadows while the 3Dfx had only fake specular lights to show off.

The PowerVR could always do this because it features infinite planes technology, which is very different from 3Dfx's (also nVidia and Matrox's technology) architecture. The main feature of 3Dfx is fillrate and raw (but not so clean) power. The 3Dfx basically renders every polygon on the screen. The PowerVR doesn't. It only renders what can be seen, rather like a portal 3D engine.

Other interesting functions of the PowerVR 250 is that it doesn't need memory for its Z-buffer. The reason for this is extraordinarily complex but it does work and it brings a very real advantage of almost no performance hit when going to 24 or 32-bit colour. The PVR250 Z-buffer is also extremely efficient with floating-point calculation and the process it uses is actually called a W-buffer. W-buffering results in better image quality than normal integer Z-buffering. W-buffering is also supported in DirectX 6.0, so any DX6 game will automatically look sharper on the PVR250.

Also of great assistance to image quality is a function of the PVR250 that I'm quite excited

about, anisotropic filtering.

Anisotropic filtering is essentially the next level up from tri-linear filtering and adds remarkable sharpness and clarity to textures. The PVR250 isn't the only card to support Anisotropic filtering, the Riva TNT also does. However, this comes with a performance hit. The PVR250 also takes a performance hit but unlike the TNT can balance the filtering. The PVR250 can actually mix bi-, tri-, and anisotropic filtering. This allows a developer to choose which kind of filtering technique to use, balancing the performance of a game dynamically. It's like polygon management but on a texture level.

Full screen anti-aliasing (also known as super-sampling) is the next ultimate image quality enhancer and those that have seen the Dreamcast in action say that this effect is absolutely incredible. Basically full screen anti-aliasing eliminates aliasing artifacts, or jagged edges on Z based perspective objects (diagonal lines). The entire game image is smoother and of much higher detail and quality.

The effect is ultimately achieved by the PVR250 rendering the screen at 1600 x 1200 x 32 then bringing the image down to 640 x 480, or 800 x 600 etc. The effect definitely works and you can verify it for yourself. Take an image from a photo editing package and scale it down. Or if you're really eager download a 1024 x 768 screenshot off the net, scale it down to 640 x 480, then compare it to a 640 x 480 rendering. The difference is astounding.



Quick Bytes

Team Fortress 2 technology additions

Some more information has appeared regarding Valve's Team Fortress 2. Most interesting is the new technology being added. In Quake 3 style, TF2 will feature parametric animation, which means the top and bottom halves of players can move independently. Examples of this would be seeing a player move his head to indicate which direction he's looking without moving the rest of his body.

In addition, MRM (multi-resolution mesh) technology developed by Intel is being incorporated into TF2. MRM is a system which scans a player's CPU, determines the processing power, and adjusts the quality of the models in the game accordingly.

Expendable

Rage software, the people who brought us the very visually appealing Incoming, are working on a new title called Expendable. Expendable is to be a third person shooter which as can be expected by Rage, offers particularly stunning graphics and 3D accelerated effects. Expendable is something that 3D accelerators have been begging for quite some time. An adrenaline filled shooter like what would be found in the arcades about 10 years ago. Think Alien Syndrome but in full 3D.

There'll be various large monsters to destroy, dark broody environments to run around in

and some beautiful 3D such as battling on glass bridges and fighting on mountains while it's snowing. There's various weapons such as flame-throwers and long-range spiral homing missiles. Also in classic arcade style, 2 players play cooperatively on the same screen giving reason for that second Microsoft Sidewinder gamepad. Expendable is due Mid May.

Mechwarrior 3

FASA Interactive, the people behind the original Mechwarrior board game, have just been purchased by none other than Microsoft. Irrespective of this announcement, MicroProse's Mechwarrior 3 is still on track and all information we've received says that some significant changes have occurred since the Activision engine.

The 'Mechs' themselves are now huge, more substantial in scale than in previous Mechwarrior games, and can now perform new manoeuvres such as ducking into crates (hmmm, that'd wanna be a pretty big crate) and hiding behind objects such as buildings. There's also new attack abilities such as being able to target and destroy specific parts of a Mechs anatomy.

Bleem!

Bleem! is a new product by a group of emulation enthusiasts that goes on sale this month. Bleem! is essentially a complete PlayStation emulator for the PC. Well, actually, that's not true - it's better.



SPECULAR SPOTLIGHT



Jumpgate

This month's spotlight goes to a genre of game I think we're going to be seeing a lot more of. The megaplayer space sim. Think Ultima Online, but in space.

Jumpgate looks to be exciting because it's based around a mix of Elite and Privateer offering space combat as well as trading and resource management. As a mega player game, players are free to roam the universe by themselves or join or form interest groups such as trade partnerships or space caravans. Guilds will come in the form of squadrons of which there will be alliances and declarations of war. You're not, however, just limited to a starfighter, you can choose to play as a trader and pilot a large freighter or aspire to become a business tycoon (perhaps for the bandwidth impaired).

The Jumpgate 3D engine looks quite exciting, offering particle systems for explosions and missile trails, shield flare and lighting effects. The best part is that the developers are stating the 3D engine isn't too heavy so won't cause lag.

Of course there's also a wide variety of ships (over 50) as well as numerous weapons and upgrades. In addition Jumpgate contains over 30 resource types such as minerals, chemicals, medicine as well as water and wood. The player may even mine asteroids in search of minerals and other valuable substances.

By taking advantage of DirectX, 3D accelerators and their abilities, Bleem! actually makes Playstation games look a heck of a lot better. Suddenly the blocky unfiltered graphics of the PSX receive a total make over with bi-linear filtering, mip mapping, perspective correction and a resolution increase.

3dfx are now sporting a new logo

Yep, they're 3dfx now (little d) and have a new logo to prove it.



Unreal Mission Pack info

Unreal fans will be pleased to know that Epic are releasing a

mission pack for their popular game. Continuing on from Unreal, your escape pod has been tractor beamed into the hold of the UMS Bodega Bay, a military starship with an EXTREMELY important mission on the planet from which you just escaped.

The Mission pack will feature 3 new weapons. The Combat Assault Rifle (CAR), a powerful automatic weapon. A new rocket launcher with fly-by-wire rockets (you can steer them) and a grenade launcher. There's also 3 new enemies and 17 new levels. Additionally, there will be 12 new single player maps and 6 new deathmatch maps.

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3D SOUND CARD SHOOTOUT

Throw out the ISA museum piece, and long live the PCI bus! With this much sound goodness, that old SB16 is more than overdue for retirement.

Sound acceleration, Wavetable MIDI and 3D Sound are now the go, with DVD just around the corner. More and more of today's hottest games are supporting 3D sound, so it's a good time to be a gamer. The two major contenders for the heavyweight bout are the Sound Blaster Live Value edition and the Diamond Monster Sound MX 300. Both cards being worthy, most people are unable to decide between the two to buy. For the purposes of this roundup references to EAX are also references to SB Live capabilities and A3D refers to any card based on the Vortex2 chipset.

Sound Blaster Live (Value Edition)

RRP: \$299

Specifications

- EMU10K1 processor (1000 MIPS and over)
- Average -120dB Noise Floor (front channel)
- Signal-to-Noise Ratio (A-weighted) 96 dB(Line) 100dB(full)
- AC97 Codec
- Real-time DSP effects
- Onboard sound acceleration

Effects and 3D

- API's supported - DirectSound, DirectSound3D, EAX 1.0 (more with driver upgrades), A3D 1.0
- Real-time effects such as Reverb, Chorus, Flanger, Pitch Shift, Distortion and more.
- Up to 131 available channels.

- 96 DMA Channels (64 for output, 32 for effects)

- 64 DirectSound Channels
- 32 DirectSound3D Channels

MIDI

- 64-voice polyphony, 8-point interpolation technology
- 192-voice (to 512 with Liveware) polyphony PCI wavetable synthesis
- 48 MIDI channels with 128 GM & GS-compatible instruments and 10 drum kits
- 2MB, 4MB and 8MB Soundfont sets, up to 32MB of samples in RAM

Installation/Compatibility

I couldn't be more happier with the SB Live - the initial driver problems have been cleaned up, the Win9x drivers are rock solid, and everything installs, detects and uninstalls with complete ease. There are no performance hits, and no compatibility problems to speak of. The SB Live is 16-bit backwards compatible as opposed to Vortex cards which are only 8-bit, this makes a large difference to the sample quality of older games.

VERDICT
5/5

3D Sound

The SB Live cannot calculate true positional audio, other than shifting the origin points as you move and it cannot dynamically alter sounds to as great extent as a Vortex card apart from altering the amount of reverb to give the appearance of 3D Space. It does work well when implemented correctly, but the SB Live chokes when in lush audio environments such as Half Life. This is because DirectSound is the underlying engine behind Environmental Audio, and when the card does not support enough DirectSound3D streams, anything that exceeds that limit becomes muffled out, or disappears intermittently.

EAX extensions are not limited to just 3D Space, so while it cannot be considered true 3D Sound, credit must be given to the versatility of

How we Tested

Installation/Compatibility

Any issues with drivers, patches, installation routines, processors, video cards and DOS compatibility. Doom2 and The Dig were used to test quality and compatibility in DOS.

3D Sound, API's supported

Overall quality of the 3D sound, features and which sound API's are supported/or will be in the future. We threw a range of games in a shootout and listed some of the results, those unlisted included Descent FreeSpace, Unreal Special Edition, Incoming and Powerslide. EAX testing was done using Baldur's Gate and Diablo. Used to test SB Live presets were Moto Racer, Starcraft and X-Wing vs Tie Fighter

Speaker Output

Performance differences on quad and dual speaker setups as well as headphones. The headphones used were the force feedback headphones that shipped with the Xitel Gamers pack.

MIDI

The test list included wavetable accuracy and ability to produce "professional" quality sound, as well as adaptability for different genres e.g. classical, techno, muzak (synthesised pop). They didn't have to be dead on accurate (due to sampling differences in different MIDI tables) as long as the overall rendition was pleasant.

DVD

Using 4 and 2 speaker configurations, depth of sound, surround effect, and overall 'theatre' power was tested. A Creative Encore DXR2 pack (2X DVD-ROM and hardware decoder card) and a gaming setup were used to test. Movies used included Replacement Killers, Contact and Dark City as well as Wing Commander 3 DVD and the DVD sampler packaged with the Monster Sound.

Software

Bundled software, quality of shipping drivers.

EAX. The environments of such games as Diablo, SimCity 3000 and Baldur's Gate did not necessarily lend themselves to 3D sound, but developers can still simulate the feel of 2D environments by positioning the sound and adjusting their reverb attributes through static presets i.e. Baldur's Gate. A large number of presets are included with the drivers, some did more than others i.e. Moto Racer sounded completely different and awesome but there was little change with Diablo.

VERDICT
4/5

MIDI

This should be the SB Live's strongest selling point, make no mistake about it, this is professional quality. The Wavetable set on the SB Live simply outshone all the rest. There were no weak instruments, and all genres performed excellently. Creative are unrivalled in their implementation of acoustic instruments, and their piano sets are the best in the industry with superb strength and resonance, I consider the MIDI synthesis as one of the wonders of the world.

VERDICT
5/5

DVD

The SB Live is the one of the best cards you can pipe the Encore through. It generated surprisingly good sound without true AC3 5.1 support. AC3 is downmixed into quad stereo surround channels from the hardware card into the SB Live. Despite all this, the front and rear effects are very powerful and real, the lack of a centre speaker did not impact much on the overall theatre experience. Its 'Theatre Power' didn't rate as highly as the virtualised AC3 and the SoftDVD software decoder but in Surround mode it came darn close. However the SB Live performs best when plugged into Creative's Desktop Theatre 5.1 solution. Creative are also working with Zoran SoftDVD, and might include the software as a Liveware! update in the future - each Dolby Digital channel would be rendered into a DirectSound 3D stream and sent to the appropriate speaker for full surround support.

VERDICT
4/5

Software

The drivers shipped with the our retail SB Live Value installed flawlessly, and the drivers themselves are rock solid. However the shipping drivers only support 8 Directsound3D streams, and in order to gain access to the full 32, updated drivers must be downloaded from the net. A large number of gaming presets are packaged

with Creative Launcher, but apart from Unreal Special Edition I didn't much care for the rest of the utilities and applications shipped, these included Playcenter (plays multiple formats, and can enhance them with Environmental effects and surround), Prody Parrot, Rhythmmania, WaveStudio, and Creative Keytar. Audio professionals will be the least likely to use the underpowered software, and like most of Creative's previous software packages, will be ignored on all but boring nights.

VERDICT
4.5/5

Speaker Output

Contrary to probably most of the online reviews and other print articles, I found that the SB Live provided the better 2 speaker solution, while both the Vortex cards like the Monster Sound and the Sonic Impact didn't really blow me away. Of the two, I found that the SB Live could output a greater horizontal range, covering 20-30 degrees more than the Vortex cards and was just a mite more accurate. Vertical positioning is still pretty iffy regardless of the number of speakers used but this will be down to driver tweaking. Rear positioning was even worse, and wasn't noticeable unless the sound whizzed past by the side.

However after adding the rear speakers, true 3D positional audio was achieved, but the lower number of DirectSound streams weakened output when sound environments became cluttered and the front speakers were given priority. There was much less of an overall impact compared to an A3D powered card with a SB Live and EAX. Chucking on a pair of headphones, the sound became more focused than it was with loudspeakers.

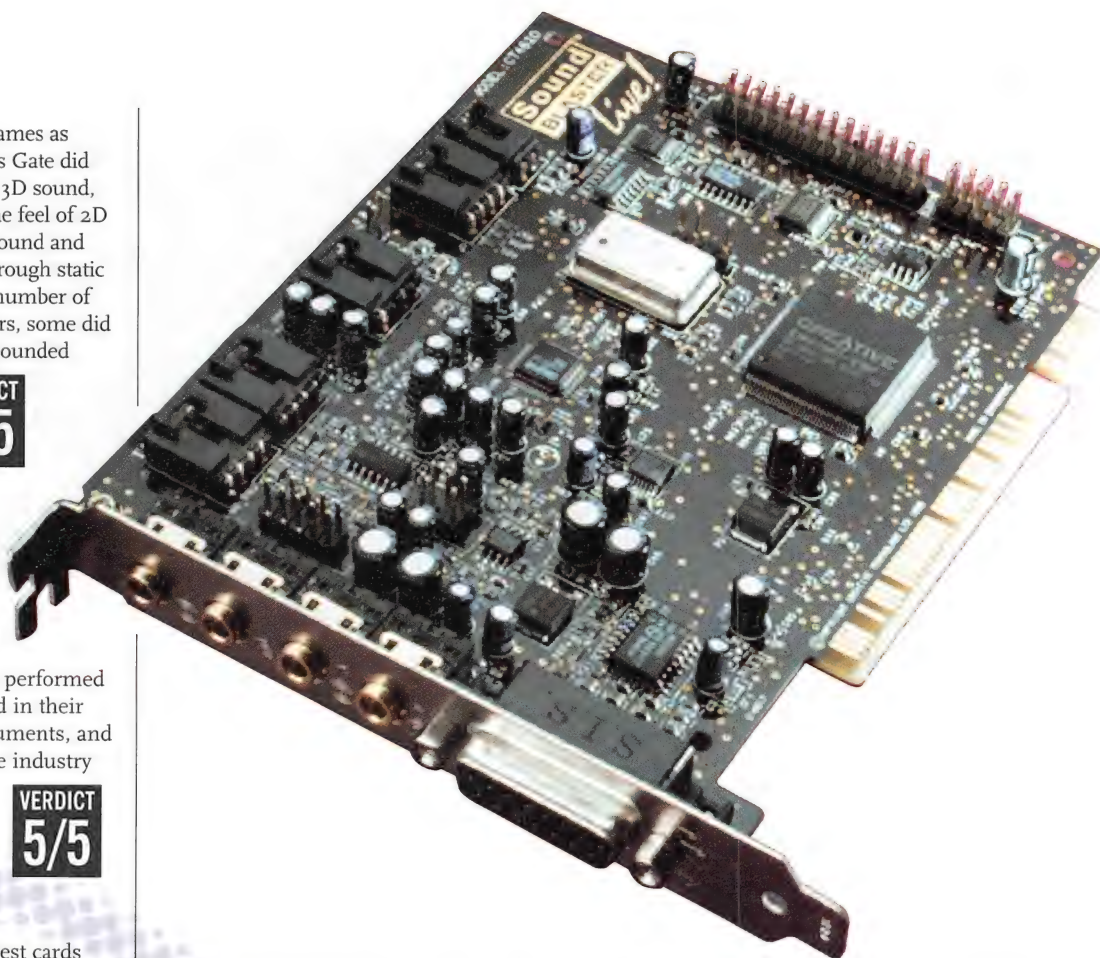
VERDICT
4/5

OVERALL

The SB Live makes a superb all rounder card; the MIDI will blow you away, and while not positional, the Live still outputs great surround audio for games, and if you're not too focused on 3D games, the SB Live also represents greater overall value.

Also, the SB Live is an awesome home theatre solution coupled together with the right hardware, add to this DirectSound acceleration and future EAX support that will rival A3D, you have a card that pretty much does everything right now. If you play a wide range of games and also like to dabble in MIDI for your listening pleasure, this card is for you.

VERDICT
5/5



Diamond Monster Sound MX300

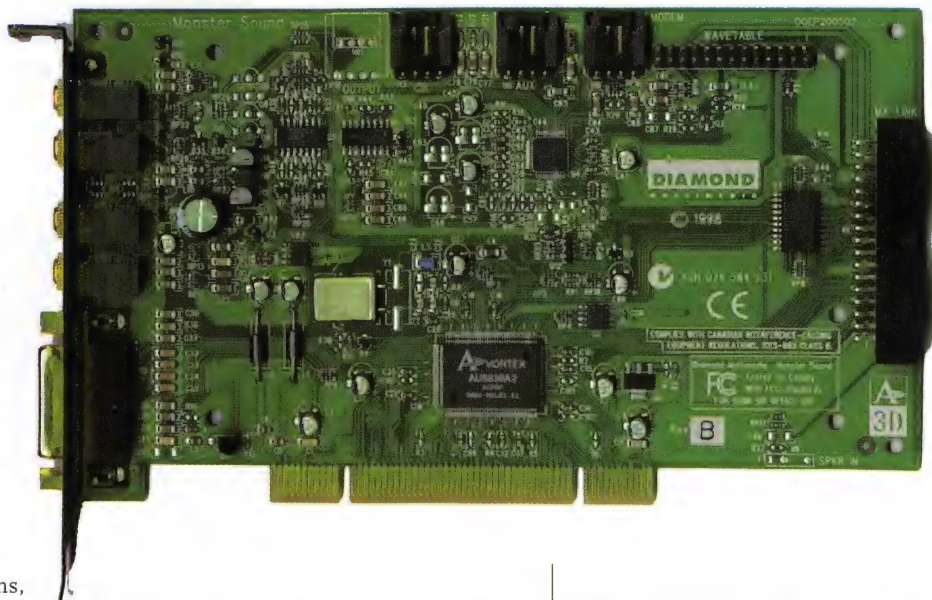
RRP: \$249

Specifications

- Vortex 2 processor (600-800 MIPS)
- Quad AC97 Codec
- Sample Rate up to 48kHz
- Effects and 3D
- 96 DMA Channels
- 92 DirectSound Channels
- 76 DirectSound3D Channels
- 76 A3D Channels
- 16 A3D 2.0 Direct Path + 60 Reflection Channels
- Real-time Doppler shift

MIDI

- 64 Hardware Wavetable voices
- 256 Software Wavetable voices
- 26-point Sample Rate Conversion
- 4Mb DLS



Installation/Compatibility

The Monster Sound and the other Vortex cards ran fine on Intel platforms, the big hoopla about performance hits such as 2-3 frames per second on A3D is a load of crap. However when we tested the Monster Sound on an average machine (AMD 300MHz, Win 98), we got a HUGE performance hit, the framerate dropped by almost a third (about 10 frames give or take a few). Owners of Celeron processors shouldn't worry, as they performed admirably. Unfortunately, legacy DOS Audio support extends only to SB Pro compatibility, which means 8 bit voice and sound samples for the older games. For the moment I can only recommend the Monster Sound for Intel owners.

VERDICT
3/5

3D Sound

What can I say, A3D 2.0 is God. All DirectSound API's are supported as well as A3D 1.0 and A3D 2.0. The sound changes dynamically as you move between areas and environments, it is calculated rather than pre-set (SB Live) and it is even possible to discern the texture of the objects and spaces around you. As you get closer or farther away from sound sources, A3D is able to actually calculate what you would hear. The experience using A3D is a lot more real than with Environmental Audio because you are hearing almost everything - it really sounds like it is coming from a real source, rather than a general direction (EAX). See speaker output for more A3D info.

All this is possible because of the extra power packed into the Vortex cards. If you want EAX as well, support is promised in the form of a driver upgrade for ALL Vortex cards. Unreal Special Edition shows that EAX

is definitely not a problem for Vortex cards, doing it even better than the Live. The Vortex chipset reigns supreme for 3D Sound.

VERDICT
5/5

MIDI

To call this studio quality is a little misleading on Diamond's part. The Monster Sound did output the best classical wavetable set (yes it beat the SB Live) and overall output but only just barely. However the remainder of its wavetable set is not as flexible as the PCI64 or even the Sonic Impact, and despite a somewhat 'nice' wavetable rendering. When other types of MIDI (such as theme songs, and jazz) were thrown at it, there was a very synthesised quality to the overall production.

The instrument sounding ranged from weird to just plain wrong due to a difference in onboard sample sets in each synthesiser's MIDI table. Piano sets needed more strength and additional treble had to be used to compensate. In a somewhat ironic fashion, where Monster Sound excelled was with greater accuracy for synthesised instruments. Sample MIDIs included with the Sonic Vortex card showed that the Monster Sound's synthesiser can be powerful if specially composed for it, but as the vast majority of compositions intended for the home computing audience are written for the Creative it's hard to recommend.

VERDICT
3.5/5

DVD

The Vortex cards all support AC3 97 Codecs, but it is the Monster Sound that shines the brightest. Positioning, dynamics and even acoustics of the sound was extremely powerful and accurate, the closest to theatre

quality of the bunch. This card gave the clearest "theatre" experience of the lot, despite AC3 being "virtualised" into 4 speakers, the results were almost comparable to a home theatre setup with 4 speakers. With the retail version, a modified version of Zoran's SoftDVD player (it will only run on the Monster Sound mind you) comes prepackaged. The minimum requirements are steep though, an AGP video card is needed as well as a Pentium II 266 or faster, so SoftDVD will not be for everyone.

One thing should be made clear though, SoftDVD is not a substitute for a DVD player or kit, it cannot access the advanced features and interactive menus directly. More accurately it is a DVD file player, not necessarily a DVD player. Of the three test titles, only Dark City could be played as the other two had customised, non standard audio streams and special features. However when SoftDVD was working, the result was amazing. Although parts of the picture became interlaced at times (usually during fast cuts), the picture quality was even superior to hardware decompression. This was the most accurate AC3 I'd ever heard without an external AC3 decoder. Although other software solutions are available, Diamond have a preliminary head-start from their competitors by offering DVD capability right out of the box in addition to already superb AC3 performance.

VERDICT
5/5

Software

Diamond have gone for a more focused bundle which has stuff in it you'll actually use. Apart from the aforementioned SoftDVD, you'll get a full version of Recoil (quite a fun tank game), Half Life : Day One, DVD Sampler (a pleasant diversion provided you

have the drive), Musicmatch Jukebox (a program to encode and play Mp3's, okay but nothing special), and various Midisoft players, composers and other utilities, the latter like Creative, not being very powerful, and they'll be far below the choices of most music professionals. The value of the pack depends on whether or not you find the software useful or if you don't already own most of the stuff anyway. I found Recoil, SoftDVD, and the DVD sampler to be quite pleasant for a packin, and MusicMatch will do the job of introducing you to MP3's if you don't know about them already. Overall this is a more useful and fun bundle than Creative's pack. Nevertheless opt for the OEM version if you think otherwise.

VERDICT
5/5

Speaker Output

The only true way to experience A3D is with 4 speakers. It is gaming Nirvana and how A3D is supposed to be experienced. It has been said that in some cases, a pair of headphones can convey 3D positions more accurately than a loudspeaker setup, though I'm very sceptical about this. Positioning was evident and clearer on the x axis with headphones than with speakers, but you get the feeling of "space" with 4 speakers much more clearly.

Using 2 speakers yielded similar results. Playing around with the A3D room demo, I dragged a sound around my virtual head. With a little effort I actually could make out front and rear positions, but only when I was familiar with the sound, and if it stays in motion. This was because the sound was filtered in a certain way to differentiate it from the others, and only once you'd 'learned' the sound could you tell any difference - something both EAX and A3D are guilty of. In Half-Life, the rear feeling was even more obscure and sounds that were supposed to be coming from below sounded like they were positioned just below the monitor, and any overhead sensation could only be heard if the sound was whizzing past you, and again the sound had to be in constant motion.

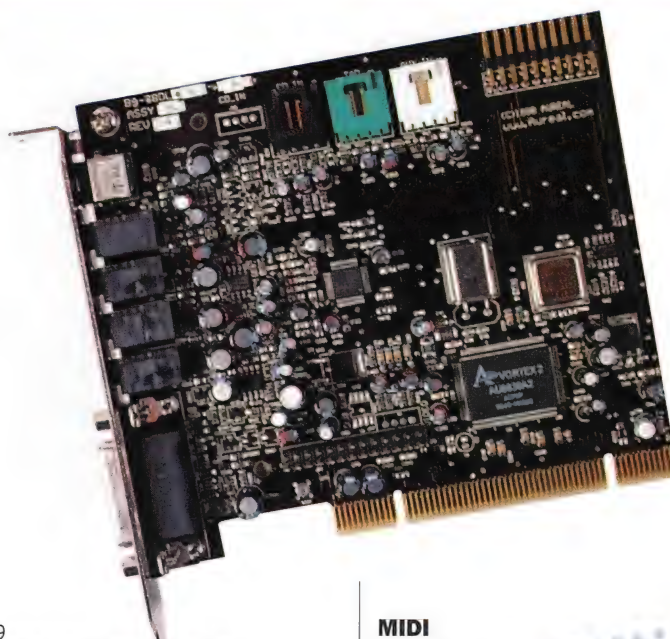
VERDICT
4.5/5

OVERALL

With cutting edge A3D sound that developers have already lined up to take advantage of, and the best 'bedroom' DVD performance at this moment, the Monster Sound is the quintessential gamer's card. The MIDI isn't that shabby and if you're running anything less than an AWE64, it will improve your MIDI too. If you're not too concerned about MIDI or non 3D games, and want to invest in a sound card for the future, this is the card for you.

VERDICT
5/5

Xitel Storm Platinum (Gamer's Pack)



RRP: \$229

OEM (without headphones): \$149

The Storm Platinum specs are mostly the same as the Monster Sound's because it is also a Vortex2 based card, however Xitel have built in a Toslink optical out (something you pay for with the Monster Sound) and improved the signal to noise ratio to an awesome 95dB. Check out the Monster Sound review for the rest of the specs.

Installation/Compatibility

The Xitel installed and setup with a bare minimum of fuss, but because only the bare drivers provided, you could be in trouble if Plug and Pray decided not to work correctly. It may sound nitpicky but a setup program (despite the lack of bundled software) to correctly install drivers, control panels etc just in case would have been welcome.

VERDICT
4/5

3D Sound

Excellent, crisper than the Monster Sound, but lacking a little in power especially via headphones at the expense of clarity. The Storm Platinum lacks any artificial boosting of the sound levels (especially bass) found in other sound cards which boost output levels for the benefit of low powered computer speakers, but can also cause distortion. Designed to be combined with some kickass speakers or a hi-fi setup, the sound quality cannot be beat. However without the artificial boost or such a high end stereo setup, the Storm Platinum runs a close second to the Monster Sound.

VERDICT
4/5

MIDI

See the Monster Sound review for more details as this is a Vortex2 based card, and the synthesiser is based on the same reference set.

DVD

DVD playback on a standalone 4 speaker setup was very plain and ordinary, without the dynamic explosiveness of the Monster Sound, but was nevertheless just as precise. The Storm Platinum gains points for expandability though. The inclusion of the S/PDIF out (toslink) which gives you the ability to hook it up to an external surround receiver. While no-one but the most financially blessed people will be able to afford a hi-fi setup classy enough to enjoy it, it is an option that nevertheless is becoming more popular. Now all we need is that projection screen.

VERDICT
4/5

Software (Bundle value)

Xitel have opted for the bare bones software approach, considering that most gamers will most likely already have the OEM games, and have little need for the novelty utilities, all they've included are Wingx and NT drivers, and A3D demos. The drivers are of a later revision than Diamond's and offer additional choices such as monitor and satellite speakers to really nail down the A3D positioning. It's great to see such attention to detail.

However instead of the software, they've opted to give you Force Feedback headphones (something you'll use) instead. I actually prefer software over headphones

though. I didn't care for the Force Feedback, and you can obtain similar headphones without that feature separately, but of course this comes down to personal preference. See the Speaker Output section for more information about the headphones.

VERDICT
OEM **3/5**
VERDICT
Retail **5/5**

Speaker Output

Like the Monster Sound, the Storm Platinum supports 2 and 4 speaker setups as well as the obligatory headphones. Xitel have also worked in special support for monitor speakers (positioned roughly above head level) and satellite speakers, but the lack of power still bugs me. The headphones are actually quite funky, and not the cheap 2 dollar shop types. These are the ye-olde heavy duty ear cuffed ones that you'll find at most public libraries. They're manufactured by Takstar to be sturdy and heavy duty, and batteries are not needed except for the force feedback feature.

They operate on two levels, but I didn't find much of a difference between the two, and they both tended to output residual vibrations when I was idle. The speakers vibrate according to the level of bass in the game, when rockets splash to the left of you, you'll get extra vibrations on the left cuff but that's as far as the 'feedback' goes. However since they operate on any bass present, they tended vibrate at even at ambient levels (when there is nothing going on but a barely audible hum), which I found quite annoying and soon turned off. To call the feature Force Feedback is misleading, and it would have been more accurate to have called it a "rumble" effect.

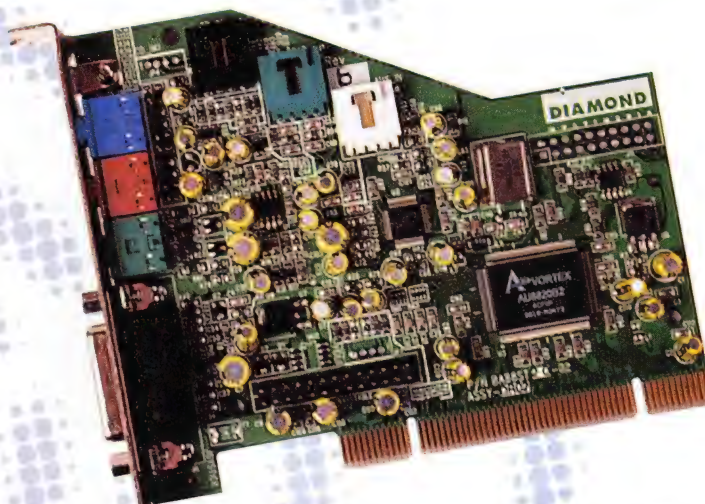
VERDICT
4/5

OVERALL

The Storm Platinum is a good buy regardless of what your preference is. The Monster Sound offers more upgrade paths for the moment, but if you don't want to pay extra for a Toslink/optical out, you should consider this card. It is priced competitively, and I am assured that by the time you read this it will be out in stores everywhere. Since the company is Australian based, you can dial 1800 631 415 or visit www.xitel.com to order now.

VERDICT
4/5

Diamond Sonic Impact S90



RRP: \$99

Specifications

- Aureal Vortex Processor
- Signal to Noise Ratio >90dB
- Sample Rate - up to 48kHz
- API's supported - DirectSound, DirectSound3D, A3D 1.0
- MPU-401 synthesiser
- 4Mb wavetable

Installation/Compatibility

No performance hits, a few problems regarding read only files on the Behemoth and invalid calls, but the card and drivers installed perfectly on my two PCs. This could be possible because the Sonic Impact was created around the same time as Diamond came out of their driver funk.

VERDICT
4/5

3D Sound

In my experience A3D 1.0 is superior to A3D 2.0's positioning with two speakers. Stuff actually sounds like it's coming from behind you, and even after sampling the joys of Half-Life, Jedi Knight still amazes me even with two speakers. Pity the option to choose between the two when using two speakers isn't available in games today.

VERDICT
4/5

MIDI

The wavetable set that accompanies the Sonic Impact and the A3D 1.0 cards of old are still awesome today. Of all the wavetable sets tested, the brass reproductions with the Sonic Impact was the by far the best, Frank Sinatra's New York passed with flying colours. Acoustic instruments were dead on accurate, string and brass instrument solos were absolutely superb. However synthesised pieces didn't fare quite as well, the Xena Warrior Princess theme

could have been confused for FM. There were also some weird reproductions that were probably keyed in with Creative synthesizers in mind. I still can't ignore how much I enjoyed the MIDI on this card though.

VERDICT
4/5

DVD

Stereo reproduction was great, but despite it's quality, this card loses out to the newer generation from the lack of a second output.

VERDICT
3/5

Software

Minor niggles with the drivers, Midisoft Soundbar 2.0 and a basic Mediaworks player is included, but there's not much to speak of here.

VERDICT
2/5

Speaker Output

A3D 1.0 still amazes me, speaker and headphone reproduction are unrivalled except by the SB Live which does quite a good job emulating it. However once A3D 2.0 capable cards have their drivers tweaked further, I believe they will truly surpass A3D 1.0 as a 2 speaker solution.

VERDICT
3/5

OVERALL

If you're hankering for some 3D sound it's best to avoid the Sonic Impact and go for the higher end Monster Sound. Even if you're a budget conscious gamer, take a long hard look at your potential finance options before committing to a Sonic Impact. While it isn't a particularly bad card, there's just a lot more that's bigger and better out there.

VERDICT
3/5

Creative PCI64



RRP: \$99

Effects and 3D

- Support for Microsoft DirectSound and DirectSound 3D (and derivatives) audio technology in 2- and 4-speaker mode, EAX support available via driver upgrade.
- Multi-algorithm reverb and chorus
- Sample rate - up to 48kHz

MIDI

- 64-voice polyphony and multi-timbral capability
- 16 MIDI channels, 128 GM & GS compatible instruments and 10 drum kits
- 2MB, 4MB and 8MB sample sets included.

Installation/Compatibility

No problems during installation now that Plug and Play technology has matured, though the CD structure could have been clearer.

VERDICT
3/5

3D Sound

The EAX support doesn't necessarily mean it can do all the stuff the SB Live can do, the EAX upgrade only allows the additional Environmental Audio extensions to be added onto existing DirectSound compatible games. There are no game presets available either, and the available audio streams are far less than the Sonic Impact and SB Live. Even with the driver upgrade, there was a noticeable lack of power when comparing EAX between the Live and PCI64.

VERDICT
3/5

MIDI

Superb! Creative are great in this respect, the onboard synthesiser almost matches the SB Live in wavetable quality. The wavetable sets have been revised, and the samples span a

greater range of instruments than its ISA predecessor. Synthesiser quality with some of the instruments of the ISA version have also been ironed out. PCI64 MIDI is now definitely better than the Sonic Impact and Vortex synthesisers.

VERDICT
4.5/5

DVD

Loses points for the lack of a second output just like the Sonic Impact, but the stereo quality is even more impressive.

VERDICT
3.5/5

Software

Nothing but the bare drivers, and the same wave editor, MIDI player etc.

VERDICT
2/5

Speaker Output

In addition to standard stereo, there is an inbuilt spatial option that is basically a surround type effect. Stereo output through headphones was also extremely clear with little static - probably one of the best in this roundup.

VERDICT
4/5

OVERALL

Not a great card to upgrade to, as there are better choices out there. However it is a great card for starters or an OEM component for new PC's, the PCI64 is a great jack-of-all-trades and a bargain buy if you want to increase your MIDI listening pleasure.

VERDICT
4/5

Final Conclusions

The SB Live and Vortex cards are all brilliant, but the war seems to be coming down to a battle of driver performance and API's. At the moment, EAX support is more widespread than A3D 2.0 which is still a relatively new API. However A3D 2.0 is, of course, fully backwards compatible, so the plethora of A3D 1.0 games available is adequate compensation until the new version gains more support.

A3D support has already become embedded with the most popular genre - the First Person Shooter. This genre has given rise to 3D engine usage in other types of games in which A3D can also benefit greatly. Even Sierra's Kings Quest series have made the leap into 3D, and within such environments is where the use of A3D to give visual clues or to act as an audio complement of "virtual reality" is where the immersive potential lies. Add EAX capability to all Vortex cards, and the future remains bright for all Vortex cards. Both API's will be broadly supported, and with manufacturers eagerly tweaking drivers in intense competition, it will be the gamer that benefits the most.

Head to Head Games Shootout

We thought it'd be nice to cover how these things sound like in the games themselves.

Half-Life

Winner : A3D Right from the opening sequence A3D really shines, as the player rotates and moves around the sound adapts dynamically, not just positionally. Differences are discernable down to each individual sound as it grows closer or farther away. Individual machines and their components could be heard and identified and the whole environment seemed to be really alive, changing according to your current level and positioning.

Quake2

Winner : A3D This was tested with the Interactive Audio Sound patch as Quake 2 does not support any sort of 3D sound natively. A3D produced great sound effects, with sound coming from all over. I heard a laser blast come straight down the vertical axis from high ground until it splashed at my feet.

Myth 2

Winner : EAX When tramping into battle, we could hear the direction of the arrows fired by the archers from the rise, fall and subsequent embedding into someone's soft bits. Dwarves blowing up things sound a lot more meatier, and water sounds were more "environmental" than with A3D. While the sound wasn't positional, there was a whole lot more 3D-ness to it all than with A3D

Net Game News

The latest happenings in the Net gaming scene

EverQuest update

EverQuest has shipped in the US and all reports indicate that most players have been heavily enchanted by the most recent massively multiplayer online RPG released (now wasn't that a bit of a mouthful?). Those, of course, that have a natural ability to be able to ignore the many bugs still present (and persisting) in the boxed version of the game.

As was heavily publicised during UO's debut year, many players voiced their disapproval at the buggy state of UO's game code, claiming that it rendered the game virtually unplayable. The same players also made a huge fuss about the lag present.

As a result, a large handful of disgruntled Britnannians left the realm of Lord British in search of greener pastures, with attention turned quite squarely to the impressively-sounding EverQuest.

It's been these same players that have again lashed out the developers, though this time at the EverQuest team. At time of press, the EverQuest team were almost ready to release a huge patch to combat a number of common and basic bugs, like crashing when giving beginner items to NPCs, or when playing a particular sound byte. It'll be the first patch of many aimed at repairing and "enhancing" EverQuest's gameplay.

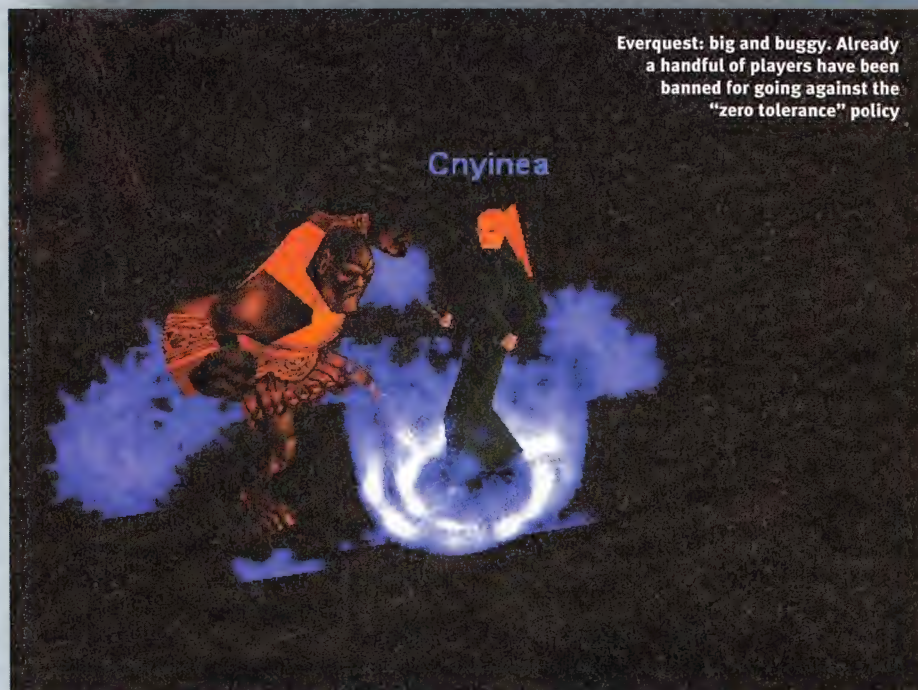
Online RPGs are a gaming experiment so large and complex, problems and bugs are bound to arise. Newsgroups have been kind to the topic, reflecting a general understanding that patience, foresight and support are needed for the ORPG to survive, especially in these early stages.

So we here at PCPP are going to take a quick poll. We want to know where you stand on the issue. Considering that developers and distributors are reluctant to set up local servers here in Au, your responses here could be the grease that gets the big wheel turning. Would you continue to subscribe to an ORPG (like Ultima Online & Everquest), even with persistent code and lag problems?

Send in your replies to ngn@pcpowerplay.next.com.au, with results to be published in the August issue of PCPP.



Everquest: big and buggy. Already a handful of players have been banned for going against the "zero tolerance" policy



Quakefiles.com

What a clever idea this is! Although there are many sites out there that hold massive online archives of files relating to multiplayer games, finding exactly what you want can be a bit of a daunting task. Although often comprehensive, they're usually slow to update and often chop off the least popular files (to conserve server memory). More often than not, that obscure file you were looking for just won't be found.

Quakefiles.com has been in development for over a year, with the aim being to help

the user find every file imaginable related to the Quake world. Basically a search engine, there are multiple search formats featured. Quakefiles.com will find all relating files, offer multiple places to download them from, and give instructions on how to install them. NGN gives Quakefiles.com two very enthusiastic thumbs up.

Check it out at <http://Quakefiles.com>.

Baldur's Gate goes hi-tech

Black Isle Studios (the people behind the infamous BG) have announced that they'll

ship Tales of the Sword Coast (the first official expansion pack for Baldur's Gate) with Resounding Technology's Roger Wilco. RW (which was reported in an earlier issue of PCPP) is a program which allows players to communicate with each other in real time verbally using a modem, sound card and microphone.

ORPG community hits new heights of freakiness

We all know that the online RPG community is in it's own special way, quite a unique (read: odd) one. But is this taking things a little too far? Sprouting up on various online auction sites recently, were a number of Ultima Online accounts for "sale". The specifics - these accounts featured several maxed out characters spread out over several servers, each with coffers full of items and gold coins (running into the tens of thousands). How much would expect to pay for an account like this, bearing in mind that the boxed version of the game sells for approximately \$80, and that you pay about \$50 for a 3 month subscription to the game? A handsome sum of \$50? Perhaps a slightly more outrageous amount of \$100?

Remember, this is the online crowd that we're talking about here. Accounts sold for hundreds of dollars in US currency, with one reportedly selling for four figures. Crazy or what?

What makes this exceptionally peculiar is that people are paying exorbitant prices for characters that are well established within the game world. Developing a character to this level is arguably a large part of the game's appeal.

Even more disturbing is the news that one

HOTTEST TC/MOD OF THE MONTH

Gloom

Developer/s: Team Reaction

Game engine: Quake II

Available: Now

Size: Approx 27MB

WWW:

<http://www.planetquake.com/rxn/gloom>

Given a brief synopsis of the Gloom TC, you'd be forgiven for having a bit of a smirk, or even a bit of a laugh.

The basic idea is that you're part of a large pest control team out to destroy a bunch of large space-hopping spiders (which somehow managed to be the face of evil in 90% of Stephen King horror movies). And of course, a couple of these missions are set in large, almost deserted space ships. Aliens, anyone?

Gloom is a class-based multiplayer TC that is of exceptional quality. You play as either the human marines, which are hell-



bent on eradicating the arachnid beasties or the alien spiders, that happen to enjoy the human delicacy, on a ridiculously large scale.

Human characters get two initial classes, being the engineer and the grunt. The engineer can build spawn points and base defences, while the grunt can respawn as a more powerful soldier with access to more impressive weaponry as the frag count increases. The alien spider's also have two

classes, being the breeder and the hatchling. Quite suitably (and disconcertedly), playing as an alien shifts the view to widescreen. The spiders also have the speed advantage.

A lot of Gloom's appeal is the atmosphere that is created in the visuals and maps (of which there are 5 new ones to play on). That and the frantic action that ensues from pitting two rather different (and well-balanced) teams against each other. A must have TC.



particularly bright lad put some characters from Sierra's The Realm (from NGN's "Where is it now?" files) up for auction, and actually managed to sell them.

TOP 5 MULTIPLAYER GAMES

1. Starsiege Tribes
2. Grand Prix Legends
3. Quake 2
4. Half-life
5. StarCraft

To cast your vote, email ngn@pcpowerplay.next.com.au with your favourite online game

Current Game Versions

Quake 2 - 3.20

Half-Life - 1.0.0.8

Unreal - 2.20

Sin - 1.03

Shogo - 2.2*

Starsiege Tribes - 1.03

* changed in last month

Essential Online Gaming Files

mIRC - <http://www.mirc.co.uk>

ICQ - <http://www.icq.com>

Gamespy - <http://www.gamespy.com>



WEBSTALK

The World Wide Web according to Spooney

MULTI PLAYER UNITED

<http://www.mpu.com.au>

If you read the April feature on LAN Party Madness and wondered where you could get a piece of the action then MPU is a good place to start. MPU's aim is to provide the ultimate LAN party experience, and even though their parties only go for a day they have in excess of 100 people there. The MPU site is well maintained and updated, plus there are competitions people can go in as well as links to all the latest gaming patches etc. If you have an urge to get a piece of LAN party action, then the MultiPlay United web-site should be a good place to start.

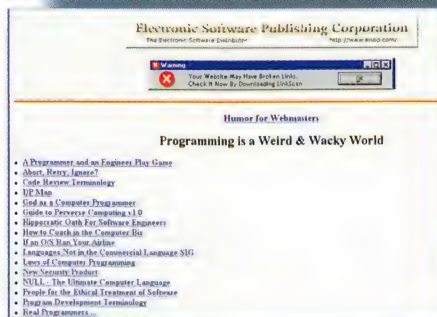
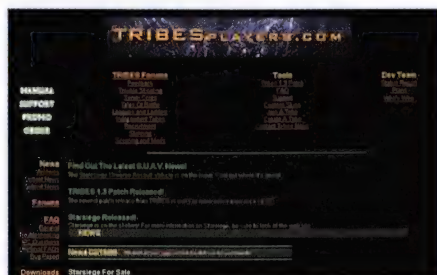
Site Design: ★★★★★

Content: ★★★★★

TRIBES PLAYERS:

<http://www.tribesplayers.com/tribesplayers>

Tribes Players is an Excellent resource for everyone who plays Sierra's brilliant new game regularly. The thing about this site is its totally geared toward the player, you can register your tribe there, search for new players, find a different tribe to join and much, much more. All the latest news is available in when patches will be released as well as what the community is up to. Got a problem - just add it to one of the many message forums and chances are someone all over the world



will know the answer. Get on the tribes bandwagon at Tribes Players.com you won't be disappointed.

Site Design: ★★★★★

Content: ★★★★★

PROGRAMMING IS A WEIRD AND WACKY WORLD

Sent by Simon "Hammer" Papworth
<http://www.elsop.com/wrc/humor/prog-wack.htm>

At first you might think this site is seriously about programming, but then you start clicking on the links and getting poems and little stories and that idea is thrown out the window. While the site design is quite dull, the content is actually pretty funny, especially if you are into programming. There is a long list of "articles" on the site which will take a long while to read, but that's about it. No flashing lights, no multimedia extravaganza just plain old humour. Vanilla, I think call it.

Site Design: ★★

Content: ★★★★★

CHALLENGE-AU

<http://www.challenge-au.com>

Much has been said recently about Australian players in the international gaming scene and this is the place to catch up on all the news and happenings around the globe and across this wide brown land. There is heaps of information on tournaments, players and general gossip from all around the quaking community. Quake 1 is still going strong in many eyes and it's sites like Challenge-AU which keep the fire going, especially with events

SITE OF THE MONTH

USER FRIENDLY

<http://www.userfriendly.org>

If you were into comic books when you were a kid, or still are now this site will bring back some great memories. User Friendly is all based around Columbia Internet and the people that work there as well as a "Mischievous" Artificial Intelligence and a "Dust Puppy" User Friendly is fantastic, just about every single strip is funny and even though they are text only the writing brings it to life. Another nice feature is that they have all the episodes they've done archived on the site so you aren't missing any of the action if you've never heard about it. Very tasty comedy.

Site Design: ★★★★★

Content: ★★★★★

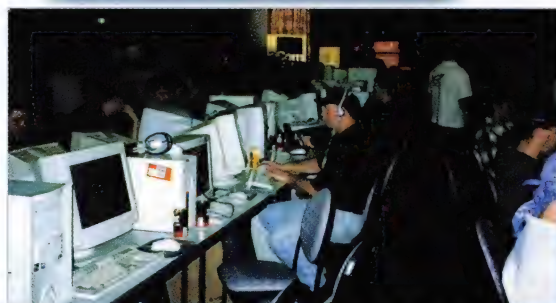


like True Gamers Invitational to spark up arguments about who is the very best.

Site Design: ★★★★★

Content: ★★★★★

Rod Spoonman Campbell
spoonman@next.com.au
<http://surf.to/spooney>



PC PowerPlay  How-to Handbook

I just bought

\$7.95

MY FIRST PC

What do I do now?

YOUR *FRIENDLY, HELPFUL AND PLAIN ENGLISH*
GUIDE TO USING YOUR PC

- Caring for your PC
- Upgrade with confidence
- Inside your PC
- Sound and speakers
- Home networking
- The BIG glossary



CD INCLUDED
With all the essential tools you'll need



ON SALE NOW

Fresh from the PC PowerPlay stables, the perfect beginner's guide to PCs.
All you ever wanted to know about computers, but were too afraid to ask.

PC POWERPLAY'S 3rd BIRTHDAY PARTY

The lads tucked their joysticks away for a special night of celebration.

On one of Sydney's last warm summer nights, the boys dusted off their uncomfy shoes and asked their mums to iron a clean shirt, while the girls donned their finest party frocks and we all looked fabulous.

The occasion: PC PowerPlay's Inaugural Annual Birthday Party. Oh what a night! Everyone was on their best behaviour - mainly because we'd hired one of Sydney's flashiest night clubs and were concerned about vomiting on the very nice carpet. Such silliness soon dissipated when the Jelly Girls started doing slow laps, handing out Stoli Jelly shots. These things were pure, satanic evil, in a wobbly orange mass. Naturally, the PCPP crew would have nothing to do with such an impure form of self-abuse - we don't need alcohol to enjoy ourselves! No sir!

As the evening drifted along, the elite invitation-only attendees discussed in earnest matters of pressing business importance, while observing the strictest standards of proper behaviour. Present and in complete control of their wits were the PC PowerPlay crew, including many of our army of contributors, plus our usually reticent sales force and, seeing as he was paying for a large chunk of it all, our boss Phil Keir. We looked damn fine and set standards of behaviour in accordance with the Amish lifestyle we choose as a model for our conduct.

The same examples of propriety were demonstrated too by our distinguished and very attractive guests. From all corners of the games industry they came by their hundreds. Never before had such a champagne collection of humanity been gathered together in one place. Publishers, distributors, spare cute chicks from Watto's wife's company and our truly beloved lifestyle advertisers. Together we festivated until dawn. With each passing hour the name 'PC PowerPlay' glowed with a brighter halo in the clear and sober minds of all present.

Late the following afternoon all agreed that it was probably a great night - the bits we remember indicated favourably that the foggy bits were probably pretty damn good.



Amber Brown (Next) & Chantal Baine (Aust. PlayStation)

Photos: Omid Daghighi, Sharon Simmons



Ed Dawson (PCPP) & Julie Ann Kwok (PCPP)



Ian McKinnon (Creative Pacific) & Ashleigh Gibbs (Xstream)



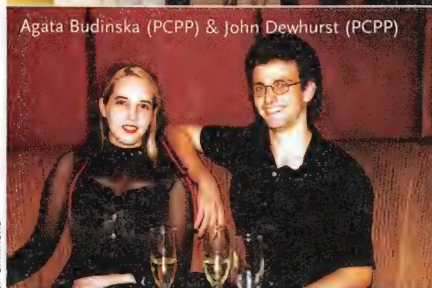
Matthew Stivala (GTI); Dale Scott & Garth Taylor (Gremlin)



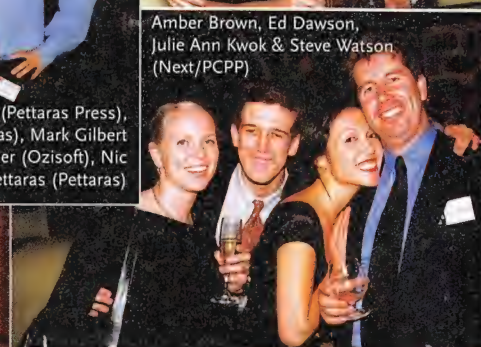
Christine Hargreaves & Jason Davis (MAX)



(l to r) Steve Pettaras (Pettaras Press), Belinda Barnes (Pettaras), Mark Gilbert (Ozisoft), Kym Warner (Ozisoft), Nic Pettaras (Pettaras)



Agata Budinska (PCPP) & John Dewhurst (PCPP)



Amber Brown, Ed Dawson, Julie Ann Kwok & Steve Watson (Next/PCPP)



Michael Hapke, Chris Lau, Warren Kim & Troy Strachan (Panasonic)



Ben Mansill, Zenna Katsikakis (Ozisoft), & Maj. Ian Lindgren (PCPP/Aust. Army)



Kate Crawford (Internet.au), Mark Gowing (Next), Richard Hine (Next), Andrew Humphreys (Rolling Stone)



Julie Ann Kwok (PCPP) & Ben Mansill



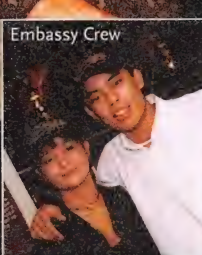
Derek Proud (EA) & Soumali Chitdamrong (Hyperactive)



Ben Mansill, Steve Watson & Sarah Byrant (N64 Gamer)



Julie Cheves (PlayStation Mad), Ed Dawson (PCPP), Soumali Chitdamrong (Hyperactive), Penny Challen & David O'Sullivan



Embassy Crew



Steve 'Watto' Watson



David O'Sullivan, Damien Healy, Shane Murray, Jock McKenzie (BMC), Nic Burrows & Jason Scott (Euro RSCG Partnership)



Nathalie Thibaux (Directsoft) & Dan Toose (Hyper)



Adam Prichard & Steven Belford (Acclaim)



Sharon Simmons (GTI) & Tony Reed (Interplay)



Eliot Fish (Hyper) & Kevin Cheung (Aust. PSX Mag)



Andrew Bech (PSI), Jelly Girl & Wayne Sharpe (PSI)



Ben Mansill, George Khoury, Sharon Simmons & Aaron Younger (GTI)



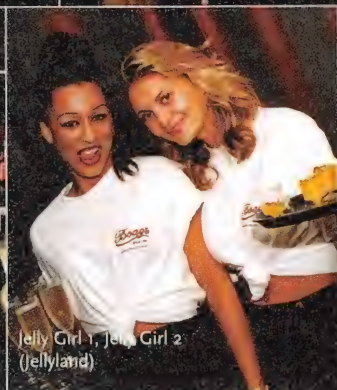
Phil Keir (The Boss!)



Nathalie Thibaux (Directsoft), Dan Toose & Eliot Fish (Hyper)



Angela Poganoski (AIS Media), Matthew Baxter (Zenith Media), Maria Barbagallo (AIS Media)



Jelly Girl 1, Jelly Girl 2 (Jellyland)



Phil Keir & Kym Warner (Ozisoft)

LETTERS

Write to PC PowerPlay
LETTERS
78 Renwick St.
REDFERN, NSW 2016
letters@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

Burning issue

Why is it that games such as Quake and even Rainbow 6 (whose violence is much more realistic. I mean run round a corner tap a tango three times in the head and small spurts of blood come out the other side as opposed to his entire body exploding like Quake. It's bloody brilliant, pardon the pun, but I digress) are given MA15+ ratings when a car racing game (Cart Precision Racing, F1RS even the great GP2) cannot maintain realism by having tobacco advertising on the cars? You buy a game then have to surf the net to find realistic carsets. Why can't games such as these be allowed to be realistic in looks in the first place and be given a rating as not suitable for children? Without paying 70 odd dollars for a game anyone old enough to hold a remote can turn on the T.V. and watch tobacco ads at F1 GP's or Indy racing. My personal opinion on the ads is they may influence a smoker to change brands but not influence people to smoke. That's what peer group pressure is for. They let games such as Quake be realistic through violence so why not let racing games be realistic by letting the cars look like their real life counterparts?

**Stuart
Email**

Sounds like a sensible idea to us. Plus, as everyone knows, smoking makes you look cool, and we gamers need all the image help we can get...

Perfectionology

Why on earth are people so annoyed by you guys not giving games like Half Life the "Magic 100%". More to the point I'm asking why you don't give them less! Now don't consider me some RPG nut who hates all FPS games, far from it. I've bought Quake, Quake 2, Unreal and Half Life and beaten them all, I also like RPGs, though. But why oh why 98%? The hefty system requirements aren't much of a reason for under 100%, but what about the bugs? I was blown away by Unreal, but then I discovered that the game locks up when you select "configure individual

bots" after about the 4th or 5th loadup! It's almost as bad as N64 not putting in things like co-op play as secrets so they didn't have to fix the bugs in them! Half Life tries to connect to the internet every time I try to load any level or game! Half life also locks up when I have CD music enabled (though I do concede that this is probably due to my "energy saving" CD drive) I would give Unreal around 87-92 for its bugs, and Half Life 90-96 due to the fact that my friend who also has the game has no trouble with it. Some say you're too scared to give games the magic 100%, I say your too impulsive on your reviews, you'll probably just shrug this off saying "You don't like it, you release your own magazine" but I thought I had to voice my opinion.

**Doug Mc Donough
Email**

Yes, the score thing. It's a little bit impulsive, some inner intuition, a little comparison and a dose of Game Reviewing Science. The latter is really, really top secret, known only to those in the inner sanctum of PCPP. It's better to simply blindly trust us. Applying the above, your letter has been awarded a score of 84.387%

Bring em on!

Where the hell is that Carnivores game! I have looked everywhere for it and no one has even heard of it. I'm sick of only being able to hunt shitty little things like the Stegosaurus and the Allosaurus. If they wanted more people to buy the game why not include one of the T-rex or another good one.

**Steve
Email**

You're a man in touch with his inner needs, no doubt there.

Logical, really

I'm writing in about the people that are complaining about consoles. I know you won't publish this but hell I just want to say that the people that keep complaining about consoles, I think that it's a waste of time writing to a "PC" mag and maybe some of us don't care that consoles suck. SO STOP WRITING IN!

**Moppy
Email**



JOLT COLA LETTER OF THE MONTH
A CASE OF THE GOOD STUFF FOR THE LETTER
THAT SAYS IT BEST

Too Expensive!

With the introduction of CD-R technology to the mainstream computing community, the debate about computer game prices and piracy have flared up again. When a company or distributor is asked about why their product costs so much, they are quick to say that those rascallion pirates are involved. Honestly, do you think that companies and distributors would lower their prices anyway, even without this rampant piracy? They are using the principle of charging what the market will bare, and the day is approaching where the market, being us, will not bare it any longer. Even if they dropped their prices by ten or fifteen dollars, to something like \$70, I know I would certainly buy more games. If I see a good product, I'd like to think that the money I give over the counter is my way of telling the company that they are doing a fine job. I don't condone piracy, but frankly paying \$90 for something you could get for practically nothing with CD-R is ridiculous. Game distributors will never drop their prices, so piracy will simply grow like a festering scab on the ass of the computer industry.

**Jamie Richter
Email**

That's the big one alright. Publishers will forever try and justify the high price of games. But yes, we all know they are simply too expensive. Letters from Publishers on the subject are welcome.

Doin' the Do

Congratulations on an excellent magazine! I love reading a magazine where I can relate to the vernacular. I feel at ease when I see the term "Tool" and "Pearler" etc. The best part is that you guys (and gals I assume), know what the hell you are on about! (Read a U.K. mag and you'll understand). Another feature that I really like, is the Flashback section on the second last page! It's great to read that I'm not the only one who got all fuzzy remembering Parallax and Sentinel. Mr. Do! is also one of my favourites in my pre-teen years. An alarming number of my younger friends say "Mr What? Is that like a coffee maker?! You're an old bastard aren't you?". Good for the self esteem that one! I'd like to be useful and offer constructive criticism, but there is nothing that I can see needs to be improved upon.

Heath Glover

Patch this!

This is just getting beyond a joke! The stuff developers expect us to download these days is crazy! Don't get me wrong, patches are great. I mean, if the developers and publishers are going to release unfinished games, we need patches to get them to work properly, don't we? But it just gone too far. The Blood 2 multiplayer patch (that's right, you need a patch just to get decent multiplayer) is 12 megs. SiN version 1.01 over 18

megs. Quake II version 3.20 (with CTF): 20 something megs.

Trespasser: 36 megs! We can expect to get file sizes this high for demos, but when you have to surrender 2-3 days downloading just to get your game to up to scratch, well, it gives you the shits, to say the least. Wake up and smell the coffee, guys. We've had enough. Paying for a full game is understandable, but paying 80 odd bucks to beta test a game is something we won't put up with.

**Tristan Uldum
Padbury, WA**

Damn straight. SiN, which was released unfinished just in time for the Xmas shopping rush, underlines this mess. Such blatant disrespect for customers is shameful, and Activision (whose reputation prior to SiN was solid gold) copped a hell of a lot over it - so much so, that they and other publishers are now very mindful of the need not to pull stunts like this.

Left out

Apart from MS's 3D Pro joystick, a left handed flight sim gamer cannot enjoy the undiscovered realm of force feedback. Okay "too bad, so sad" I hear, "we only make up 10% of the population", but it is so frustrating knowing that you can't get one. A thought has been to buy one and hack it to pieces to fit, but if you do it wrong you're left with a \$300 paperweight. Any hints for us lefties? Any other lefties created a masterpiece? You're not a leftie

are you Major? MS's joystick is useable but inadequate for any sortie over 5 minutes. Help!

Geoff Robinson

Box Hill North

According to a Microsoft, and as you have pointed out - only 10% of the population are lefties. Now, also according to Microsoft (and they spend zillions of \$'s studying this stuff), of these lefties, around half prefer to use their right hand for joysticking. This all destroys the economics of making a stick specific for you lefties. We agree it's a bit sad, but can understand the logic. Still, at least MS make their sticks mostly symmetrical, which makes them usable for you outcast freaks (ohhh, sorry, that just slipped out, stop me! Stop me!). All you're really missing out on are the hardcore ergonomic sticks from Thrustmaster and co. You know the ones, the full-on military spec jobs that are among the finest things a gamer can hold in their hands, as opposed to the poxy, sterile and plain dull sticks you'll have to settle for. There, cheered up now?

Gamists

In response to April '99 issues' letter "My Opinion". Buddy, that's all it is, your opinion. You and me have different tastes. There are racists and feminists in this world but you my friend are a gamist. I'm afraid that I'll start another one of those Console vs. PC type arguments so I won't go on explaining why I like Sim and Strategy games better than Action and Adventure apart from saying that it sorta just sucks you in. I would much rather be playing SimCity or Railroad Tycoon 2 than Tomb Raider because I think Tomb Raider sucks! BUT, that doesn't mean that I think that all Tomb Raider CDs should be gathered and burnt in a big bonfire. I have a friend who likes the same games as you but that doesn't mean that I think he's a stupid idiot! It just means that there isn't as much game swapping going on between us as there would be. And what about music? Should the music you like be automatically accepted the only thing to listen to. Some people like Beethoven, some people like Metallica, hell, some people even like the Spice Girls! But we're not all at each other's throats (just barely)! So just have a bit of respect and toler-



The wait's been unnervingly long, but it's almost over. PCPP spies have obtained a new official release date. Expect it on the...

ance. After all, what if one day developers stopped making the games YOU like? Who would need help then?

Dmitry Reznik

This letter is best enjoyed while listening to Devo's Freedom of Choice.

Tiberian Son

Sigh, sigh and sigh. PCPP I hate to ask this but are you that dumb? You say that C&C 2: Tiberian Sun is not out yet and will be out in October. This is not so my friend owns the game, he got it in February 1999. Please revert all attention back to the letters section of issue 34 of PCPP and more specifically the letter 'Anyone Home' you tried to make that guy feel like an idiot. But the game was out and this is not a horse mag. Better still read your own magazine. Now turn to page 58 before the score list. Now can you all see the picture of the Tiberian Sun box with the little \$79 above it now there you go. Does it make you feel better to know that you are the silly ones? I hope you apologise to the person you made look stupid. If you are wondering if that was me that wrote that letter it was not.

Matthew Shirvington

Email

Tiberian Sun has not (at the time of writing) been released. The page you refer to shows the Tiberian Sun box, a case of optimistic advertising by the shop involved. And your friend that has had the game since February? Sorry, but he's having you on...

We want our footy!

I must start by congratulating you guys on a top magazine! It is the only Gamers Mag as far as I am concerned! Anyway now to the point. EA Sports has inflicted the ultimate punishment upon all Aussie gamers. I speak of the lack of Rugby League games. Since the release of ARL 96 their has been ummmm let me count... 0 Rugby league games released by EA Sports! ARL 96 was a great game for its time back then and I am sure that sales of that game had to be high, especially in Australia and NZ. Now I am not asking for a totally full-on Australian version from EA, a world wide version (or those countries that play League) will do, with different leagues included into the game just like FIFA 99 brings the English Premier League and Scottish Leagues to that game. I know that all of my friends would die for a Rugby League game especially one with all of proper players and teams. The blame must not fall fully on EA Sports lap though, the blame is also partially the NRL's fault for not even considering this idea.

Doggies to win in 99.

Matt (FLAPS)

Email

Original SiN

While reading your Sin playguide in issue 34, I read that Unreal introduced location damage, or as clever people call it, collision detection. This, in fact is incorrect. Then what PC game was it? I hear you

all say. The truth is that it wasn't a PC game... it was a Nintendo 64 game! Lies, lies! The PCPP writers scream. But it isn't a lie. Go on Ben, tell your loyal PCPP readers the truth. That thanks to the classic 64 game, GoldenEye, all you evil PC'ers are now enjoying the true glory of collision detection. You can't handle the truth! Say thank you to all 64 owners, or forever bear the shame.

Your mag has a really bad name, I guess in the next year or so, when Macs (which are better then PCs, of course) are the latest and greatest (don't tell me you don't feel the disturbance in the force) you'll just have to change your name!

Sally McInerney

Email

P.S

Joshua Burgess (letters, issue 34) is a freakshow and I salute his G3 owning workmate. Oh and yes, the G3 can do what the workmate says.

We could lame out and suggest that our PC games SiN and Unreal were well into development when GoldenEye was released, etc. But that'd just be a petty attempt at winning the increasingly dull console vs. PC 'debate'. We could diminish the importance of your point with a carefree "so what? It's just not important" or we could come up with some incredibly witty and incisive comment that satisfies everyone, yet still implies that PCs are the only true way. Sadly, a high powered meeting of the PCPP Braintrust yielded no such comeback, so, Sally, great point, nice letter and have a nice day.

Have it all

I am going to end this war with console vs PC right now. If you think console is better then you're a turd burgler. The perfect example of a elite wannabe. Now let me explain a PC can be any console you wish it to be; just get on the internet and download what's called a Emulator. Let's say you got a N64 emulator, next you will have to find a N64 ROM (game) to use with it, they're always on the site were you got the emulator from, download that and you just got a N64 and a game for free. Emulators take about 10 min to download while games take any were from 30 min to 2 hours. There's only one site at the moment that gives you a working N64 emulator but all other console emulators work. So PC WINS!

The OverLord Email

Naturally, Nintendo, Sega and Sony aren't super happy about these alleged emulators. So, we'd like to officially state that there's no such thing. Not at all. No way.

Settling down

What's happened to Settlers 3? It's been hit by the Clone Virus! We now have storage pits and priests like in Age of Empires and temples as in Populous. Oh, and while were at it we make everything bigger and kids story book buildings that are so similar you can't tell one from another at a glance. Just to make a game that was hard more confusing we replace the Headquarters building with a tower like all the other towers. They also tell us that some buildings etc won't be available for on line play, on account you have to make some sacrifices. Well, they can sacrifice the whole game for all I care, I was a diehard Settlers player. This was a good single player game you could relax in front of, sandwich in one hand, when you wanted to rest your sword arm. I thought the whole object of the game was to sit back and watch cute little guys do all the work, only to but in at the closing stages to wipe out the enemy. Sigh, why couldn't they just improve the graphics and game play like Sierra did with Caesar 3 and give us a few different sce-



More artwork from the soon to be released (no really) Command & Conquer Tiberium Sun

narios like, Space or Undersea like Civ. Was that too much to ask!? Blue Byte you stuffed up! Thanks to PCPP I won't be wasting my money on this one!

**B.lbberson
S.A.**

Upgrade curse

I love games, and I love playing games, and have been doing so since I was lord high and mighty for owning a C64, but of late (probably since the introduction of the Pentium) I've noticed a disturbing trend. I'm currently running a Pentium200MMX with 64Mb and a Voodoo2, which now only just gets me by for most games, but why? There seem to be a stream of new games coming out which use way too much CPU power for what they deliver; on one hand we have Half-Life, by far the greatest FPS I've ever seen, which runs on my machine without even bothering with 3D acceleration, well done to Valve for choosing an engine programmed by people who know what they're doing. Compared to say Blood2 which is visually inferior and runs like a dog with no legs, what's happening? are people relying too much on 3D API's and not their own code now? Do people believe in optimisation? Or have CPUs become so quick



they can give up and compile something in VB and call it professional? Maybe, it's just everyone has Microsoft syndrome and think that we should all just waste our money buying better CPUs rather than their games. I dunno.

Antrent Email

It's a trend that's been with us since the dawn of gaming and won't ever go away. Things just keep getting better, is that really so bad?

Sound off

What has happened to the soundtrack lately? I have just started to notice the crap that backed the cool games we pay money for! For example, Quake - you'd think

with Trent Renzor of Nine Inch Nails working on the soundtrack he'd at least be able to put something good in! Instead of that continuous lame wind howling with the occasional techno piece you'd think he could at least put 'The perfect drug' or 'Closer' (I wanna - BEEP- you like an animal!) into the soundtrack! (or, even better, the techno he did for the intro to 'Seven'). Why don't the companies put to use all the spare money they have instead of buying vibrators! The bands they could get! Think about it - Korn, Marilyn Manson, a bit more Korn, Metallica, Rage Against the Machine, the list is endless (well, very long anyway).

**John Wilson
Email**

COMPETITIONS

TOCA 2 FIGHTER SQUADRON

Given how much we loved TOCA and that we still take it for a test spin 'round these parts, it would have been a total tragedy if the sequel was anything short of brilliant. Well brilliant it is. So good in fact that it had quite a few of the PCPP staff bugging off home at lunchtimes a couple of days a week to get some more TOCA 2 hours in. Pure class this is. It's the type of racing game that'll have the enthusiasts twitching with joy, and the rest of us grinning madly. Ozisoft know how much you want it so they've sent us a half dozen copies. All you have to do to win one is answer the following question, send it in to us and hope like hell that you get picked.



Q. Who is this famous TOCA Driver?

The time is right to be a prop sim freak, with stacks of titles to choose from. Fighter Squadron just happens to be one of the good ones. Hark back to the days when pilots relied on pure skill, not millions of dollars worth of electrical equipment. Activision reckon it's so fantastic that they've given us 6 copies to give away. So when you're sending that thankyou note to Activision, remember that a bunch of flowers would do quite nicely. To be in the running just answer this question.



Q. What was the standard armament for the Focke Wolf 190-D9?

STARSIEGE

No, not the fabulous first person shooter multiplayer fest (that's Starsiege Tribes dopes!), but the latest mech combat sim to come out of



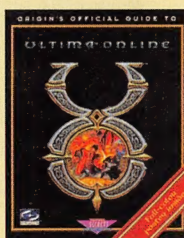
Dynamix. This one has been years in the making and after a few minutes in the game you can't help but realise that it was time well spent. Blending some hard-core strategy elements with first person action, Starsiege features a bloody riveting storyline to help flesh out the experience. And the graphics are top notch too. We're giving away a copy of Starsiege each to six lucky PCPP readers. Cheers to Dataflow!

Q. What is the name of the new American space shuttle currently in development?

ULTIMA ONLINE

Thanks to the ultra-funky people at EA, we've got 2 UO guide books to give away.

Q. What are the 8 virtues upon which Lord British built his vision for a greater Britannia?



ALIEN

It was the next logical step and thankfully Aliens vs Predator is NOTHING like the Alien Trilogy first person shooter released a few years back. This one actually rocks, and rocks hard. Whether it's the steady beep of the motion sensor and the subtle rumble of the marine's flame thrower, the absolutely awesome gadgets of the predator or the sheer speed and viscousness of the aliens, there's something in this one for everyone.

EA, being the hard core Aliens fiends that they are (what else do you think they're doing at lunchtime besides playing this game?), have put together 5 must-have Aliens packs. Each include a copy of the game, as well as the Alien Saga video pack (containing Alien, Aliens, and Alien 3) and Alien Resurrection. Just answer this question...

Q. What's the name of Lt. Ripley's feline sidekick in Alien?



LARA MOUSE MATS

We've still got truckloads of Lara Croft mouse pads (er, 41 to be exact) left over from #35 to give away. Keep it calm and orderly, people! Thanks to the kindly people at Hillard.

Q. Who did Kate Capshaw (the one that played Indiana Jones' female sidekick in The Temple of Doom) marry in real life?



WHERE TO SEND

Write the answer, along with your name and address on the back of an envelope.

Tip #1: Don't forget to put the competition name on the front of the envelope. It's saves us lots of hassles.

Tip #2: We don't actually open competition envelopes, so don't include a competition entry for every comp on a single piece of paper in one envelope.

All entries close June 20th

Send to:

<competition name>

PC PowerPlay

78 Renwick St

Redfern NSW 2016

Issue 35 Winners

HERCULES S3 SAVAGE GRAPHICS

ACCELERATOR

Q. Who was Hercules' father?

A. Zeus

L Valentine, Moruya NSW

J Marshall, Tanunda SA

B Hellard, Glen Iris VIC

SIM CITY 3000

Q. What is the full name of 'Mag-Lev' transport?

A. Magnetic Levitation

T Judd, Thurgoona NSW

A Miles, Eltham VIC

R Johnson, West Busselton WA

J Rawlings, Lyneham ACT

D McCall, Strathmore VIC

S Bragg, Newtown NSW

HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC 3

Q. How many knight of the round table were there?

A. Although it is commonly believed that at least 24 knights accompanied King Arthur on regal matters, it is generally accepted that there were 12 knights giving council at the round table.

D Figarra, Chatswood NSW

R Kendrick, Seaford Rise SA

K Scritchley, Pheasant Ck VIC

J El-Hayek, Old Guildford NSW

C Raj, Highton VIC

M Cullinan, Mt Evelyn VIC

UO GUIDE

Q. How many different elements are there in UO: The Second Age, and what are they?

A. 9 - Earth, Fire, Water, Air, Blood, Flesh, Poison, Ethereal and Death.

L Jane, Keilor East VIC

LARA MOUSE MATS

K Fung, Balwyn Nth VIC

L Cocks, Glenroy VIC

A Martin, Angaston SA

A Burns, Mirboo, VIC

D Alcock, Gold Coast QLD

D Westaway, Wendouree VIC

J Bowd, Leichardt NSW

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD THE STYGIAN ABYSS

Re-immense yourself in one of the most important titles' in RPG history

Publisher: Origin/EA

Developer: Looking

Glass/ Blue Sky

Year: 1992

Requirements: 386,

4Meg RAM

Everything old is new again. For years Origin had been churning out epic role-playing adventures with their acclaimed Ultima series. Although best known for their top-down and, later, isometric view point, each of the early Ultima games also used primitive 3D graphics. Until and including Ultima V, the underground dungeons of Britannia (as well as the other worlds you journeyed to) were predominately depicted in wire-frame 3D and explored thanks to a step-by-step movement method.

However, Ultima VI saw Origin abandon this potentially anachronistic set-up in favour of a wholly isometric experience.

Meanwhile, Lord British had wisely handed the licence for an off-shoot Ultima game to the clever people at Looking Glass Studios. The final result - Ultima Underworld - saw a resurrection of the first-person 3D perspective and, in doing so, became what is still widely regarded as the best dungeon-based RPG ever made. A sequel followed a year later that was perhaps the better game technically, but it's the original that deserves most of the acclaim.

The Stygian Abyss forged significant innovation in two areas - its graphics technology and its gameplay. On purely visual terms alone, this was a masterpiece. The relatively small viewing window belied the impressive technical achievements it portrayed. Before Wolfenstein, this was the first PC game to utilise a real-time 3D engine. Proper 3D it was, too, with intricate environments featuring split level tunnels, bridges and rooms on top of



The Slasher of Veils dies laughing as our hero once again wears his underpants on the outside



rooms. Not even Doom, released a full two years later, had realised the added benefits three-dimensionality could offer. Yet here was a game - an RPG, would you believe it! - fully extending the x, y and z axes of its architecture. Much of the Underworld games' oft-praised atmosphere was due to the undeniable immersive pull of its 3D world.

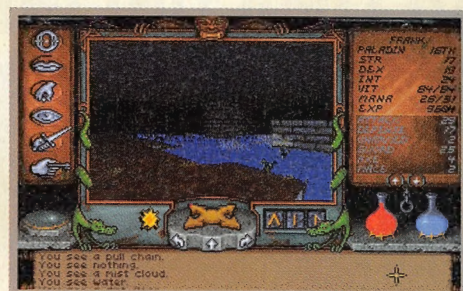
A further aspect of innovation, and one just as crucial to generating that atmosphere, arrived with the gameplay. Ultima games had always emphasised NPC interaction over brute killing and

Underworld was no different. With the obvious exception being that you didn't even have to attack the monsters, you could chat with them instead. Whole tribes of lizardmen, dwarves and goblins scrounged a miserable existence in the Abyss, presenting you with conflicts to be resolved and allies whose favour had to be won. A host of minor characters also populated the Stygian depths, fleshing out the game world with their sor-

rowful tales and engaging you in a number of mysterious quests. Where so many RPGs lamely sought to satisfy us with tedious hack and slash, Ultima Underworld gave us a rich and fascinating mini-world to live in for a few months. Personally, for me it ranks as one of the best three games I've ever played.

Now, of course, we'll soon have Ultima: Ascension boasting an innovative, new 3D graphics engine. But, as we know, it's really just Ultima returning to its roots. See, like I said, everything old is new again.

David Wildgoose





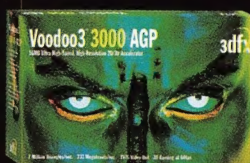
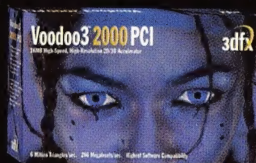
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